SUPER BBC

同棲愛 ②

水城せとな

WHEN I FELT LIKE SOMEONE MIGHT BE FOLLOWING BEHIND ME,
I INTENTIONALLY RAN A BIT.

WHEN I FELT LIKE SOMEONE MIGHT HAPPEN TO PASS BY ME,
I WAITED A BIT.

WHILE I WAS DOING THIS,
THE LAST TRAIN SEEMED
TO DISAPPEAR.

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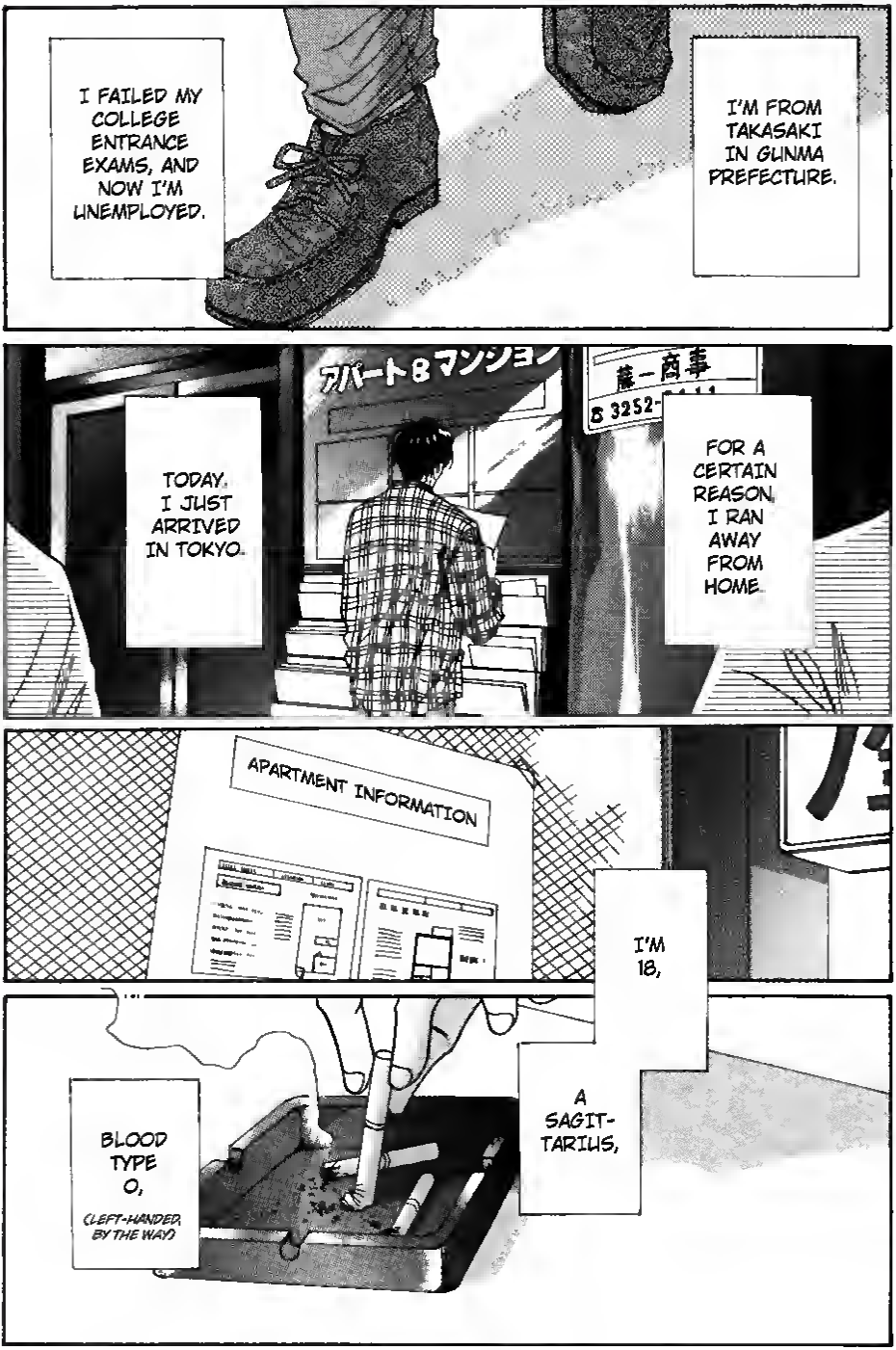
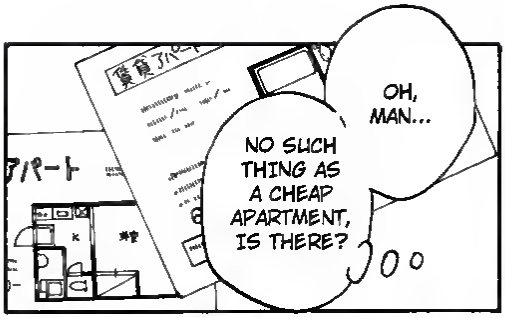
KOUTAROU'S FUTURE!? - PART 2 268

CHAPTER 9: THE KEY TO FULIKO'S PLACE - PART 1

MY
NAME IS
TSUBAKI
SUGIURA.

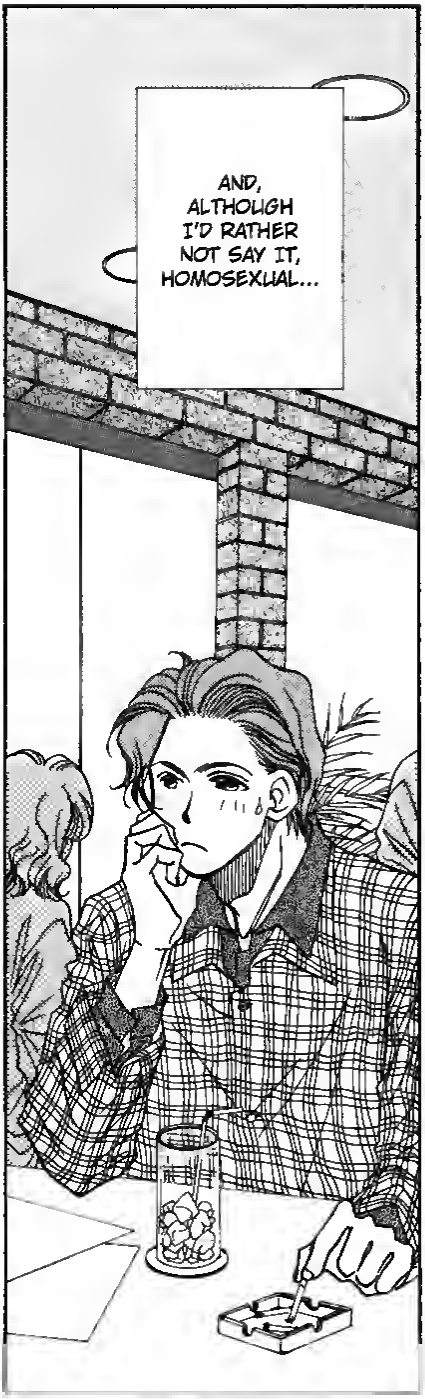

I FAILED MY COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMS, AND NOW I'M UNEMPLOYED.
I'M FROM TAKASAKI IN GUNMA PREFECTURE.
TODAY, I JUST ARRIVED IN TOKYO.
FOR A CERTAIN REASON, I RAN AWAY FROM HOME.
APARTMENT INFORMATION
I'M 18,
A SAGIT-TARIUS,
BLOOD TYPE O,
(LEFT-HANDED, BY THE WAY)


OH, MAN...
NO SUCH THING AS A CHEAP APARTMENT, IS THERE?

I GUESS I WAS BEING OVERLY OPTIMISTIC AFTER ALL...
SIGH

WELL... THERE MIGHT BE SOMETHING WITHOUT A BATHROOM, WITH SHARED TOILETS THAT WAS BUILT IN THE 20s ..
HUH? RENT UNDER 300 DOLLARS?

BUT IF I DON'T SOMEHOW FIND A PLACE REALLY SOON...
THERE'S NO WAY I'M GOING HOMELESS.
DON'T JOKE ABOUT THAT.


AND, ALTHOUGH I'D RATHER NOT SAY IT, HOMOSEXUAL...

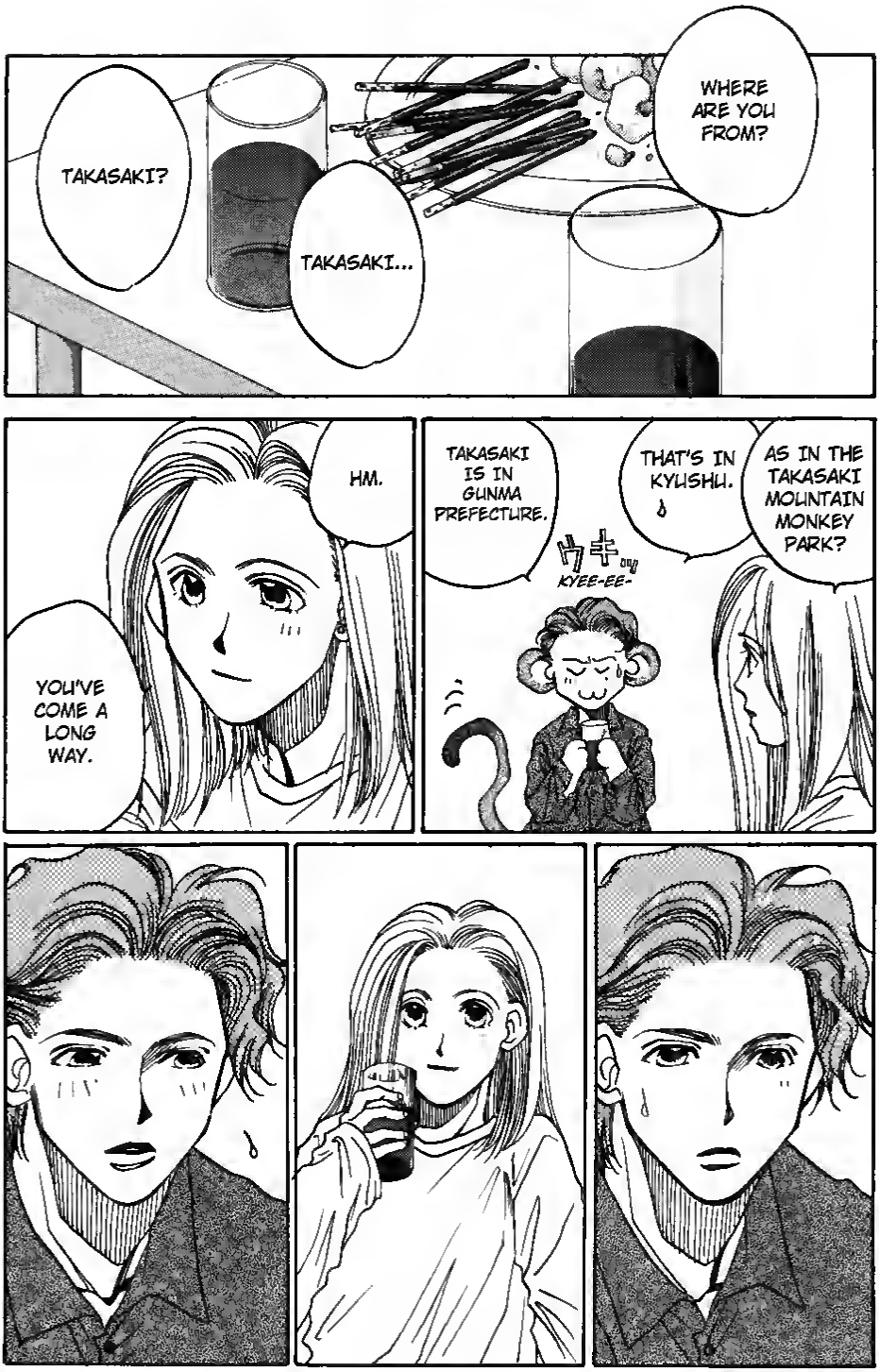
THUD
AH!
CRASH
SPLASH
I'M SO SORRY! I'M SO SORRY!
ACK-
AH-
.....

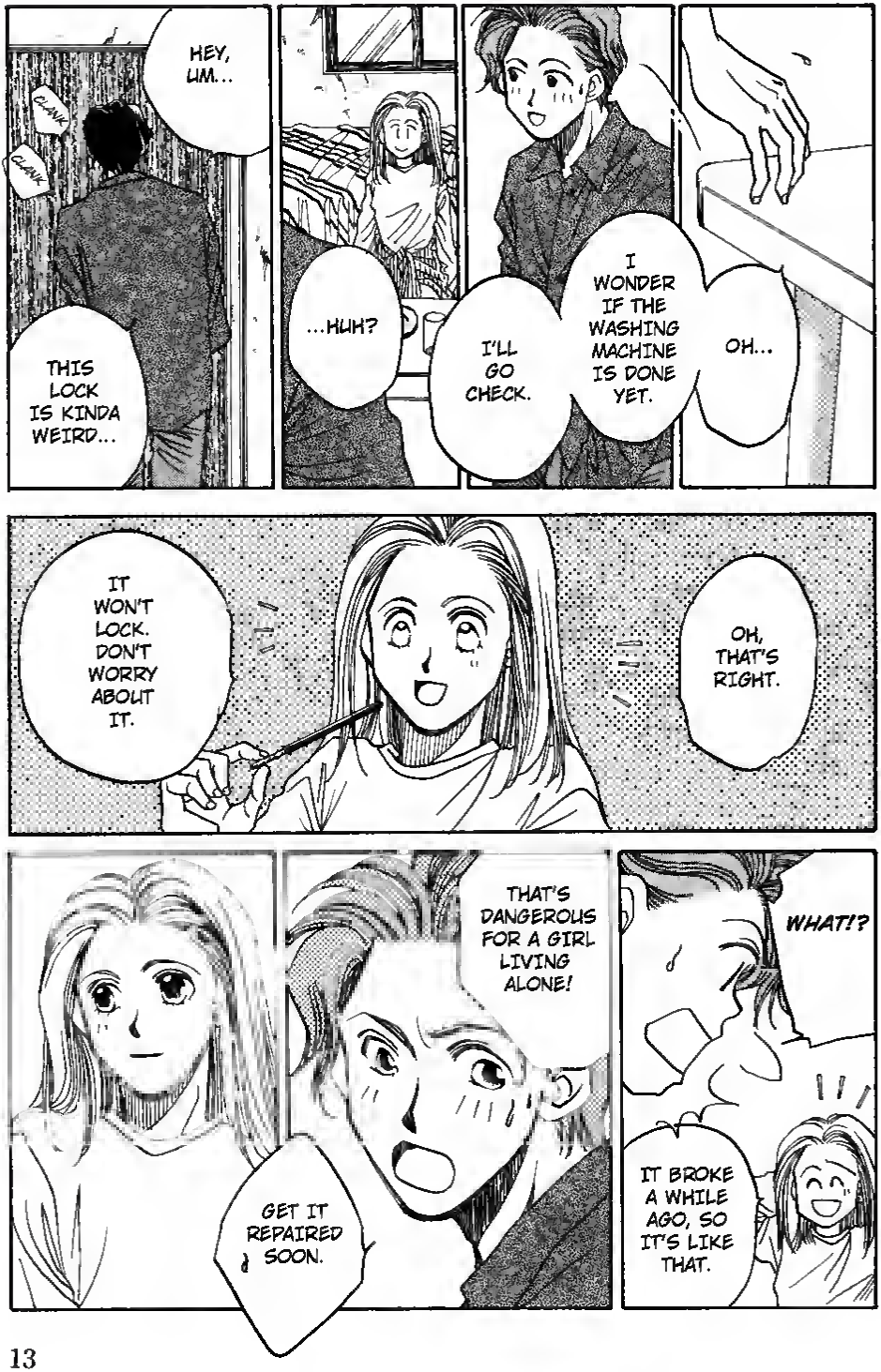
UM, WHAT SHOULD I DO...
FORGET ABOUT IT. IT'S OKAY...
HUH? BUT...
UM, I'LL PAY THE CLEANING BILL, SO...
WOULD YOU GIVE ME YOUR ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER?
.....
IT'S FINE. REALLY.
BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE A HOUSE OR PHONE...

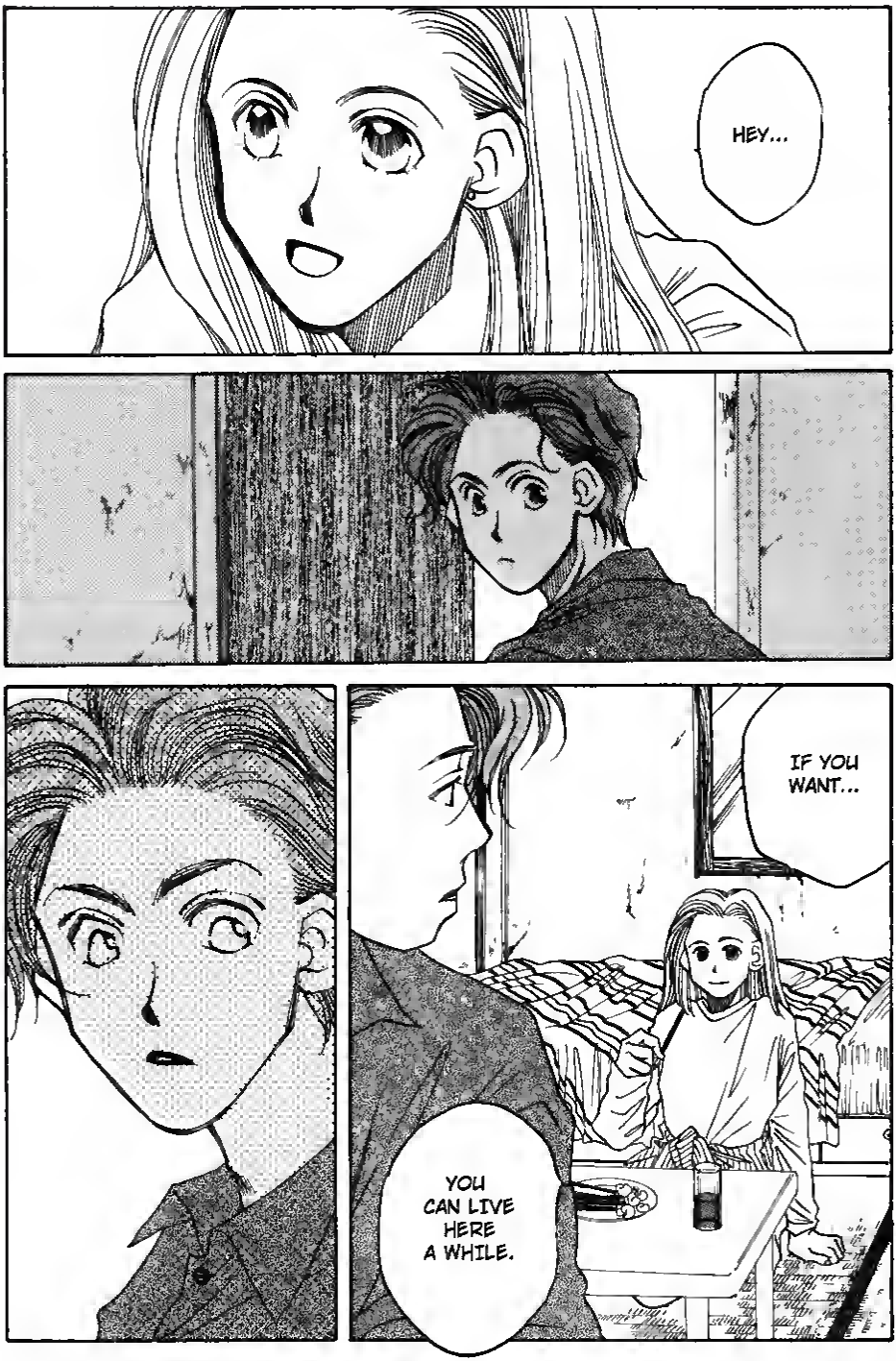
#11
UM...
CLICK
I'M OFF WORK IN TEN MINUTES.
IF YOU'D LIKE...
MY HOUSE IS NEARBY...

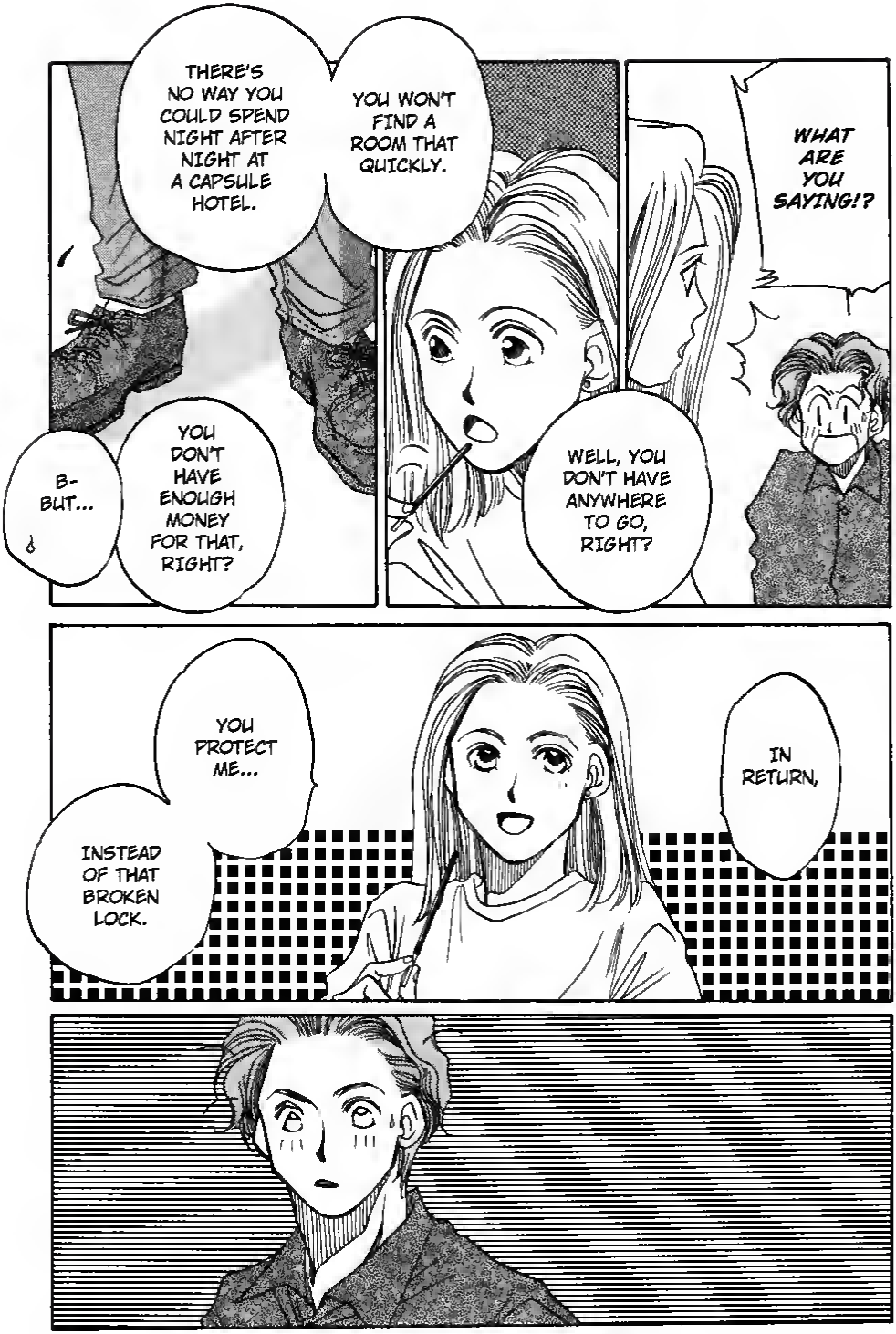
WASHING MACHINE
HUMMM
HUMMM
SORRY IT'S SO SMALL...
JUST SIT WHEREVER YOU CAN.
IS ANYTHING WRONG?
N-NO...
I WONDER IF A RUNAWAY CAN GET A PLACE LIKE THIS...
HMMM...
CLATTER
SHE'S GOT A GREAT PLACE HERE.

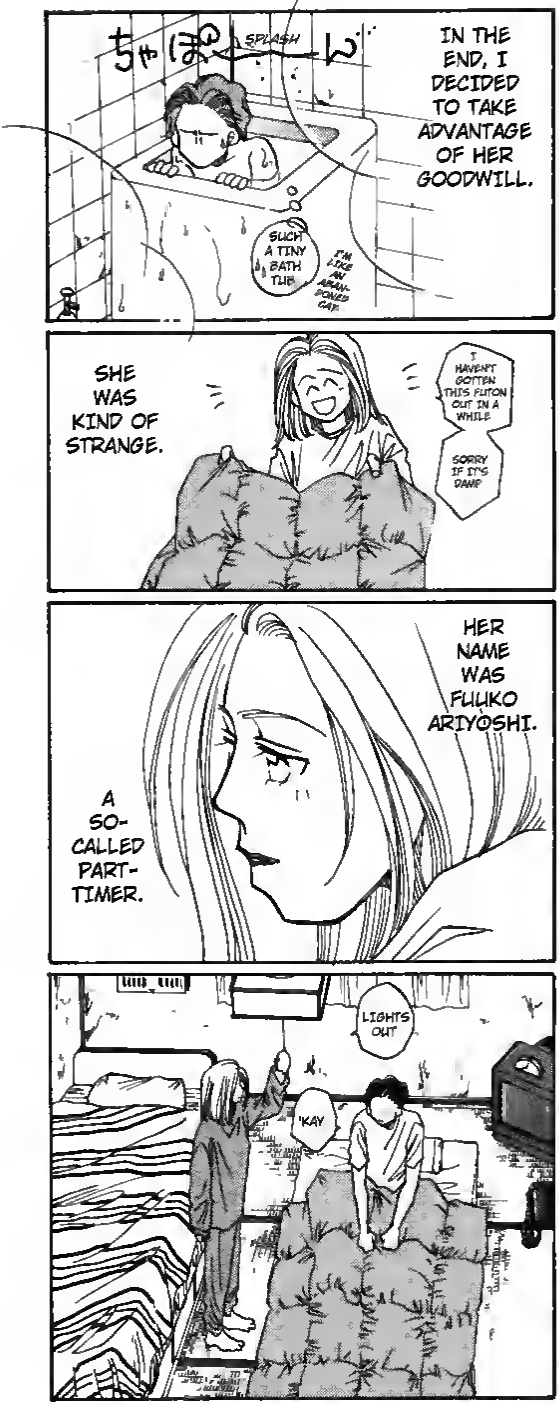
IT'S NEAR THE STATION, AND IT EVEN HAS A BATH TUB!
AH- HOW RUDE!
THIS IS ¥480?
¥480
¥480.
COULD YOU TELL ME HOW MUCH THE RENT IS HERE?
JUST FOR REFERENCE
UM, IF YOU DON'T MIND...
SLUMP
THAT'S RIGHT..
PRICES IN TOKYO ARE SO HIGH...
GLUG
GLUG
ARE YOU A RUN-AWAY?
WHAT'S WRONG?
UH...
YEAH.

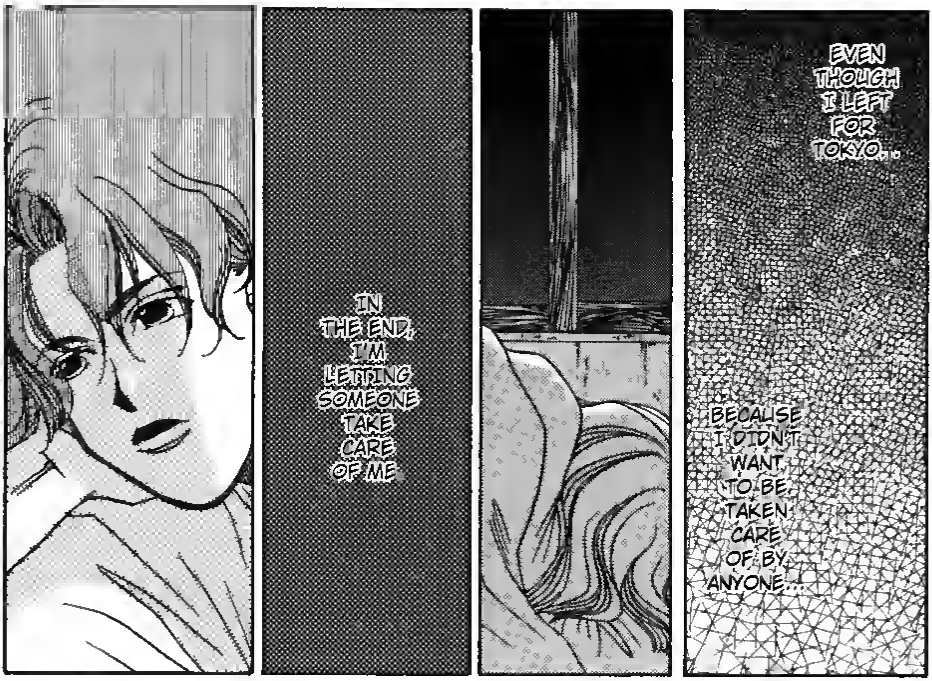

TAKASAKI?
TAKASAKI...
WHERE ARE YOU FROM?
HM.
YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY.
TAKASAKI IS IN GUNMA PREFECTURE.
キィー!!
KYEE-EE-
THAT'S IN KYUSHU.
AS IN THE TAKASAKI MOUNTAIN MONKEY PARK?

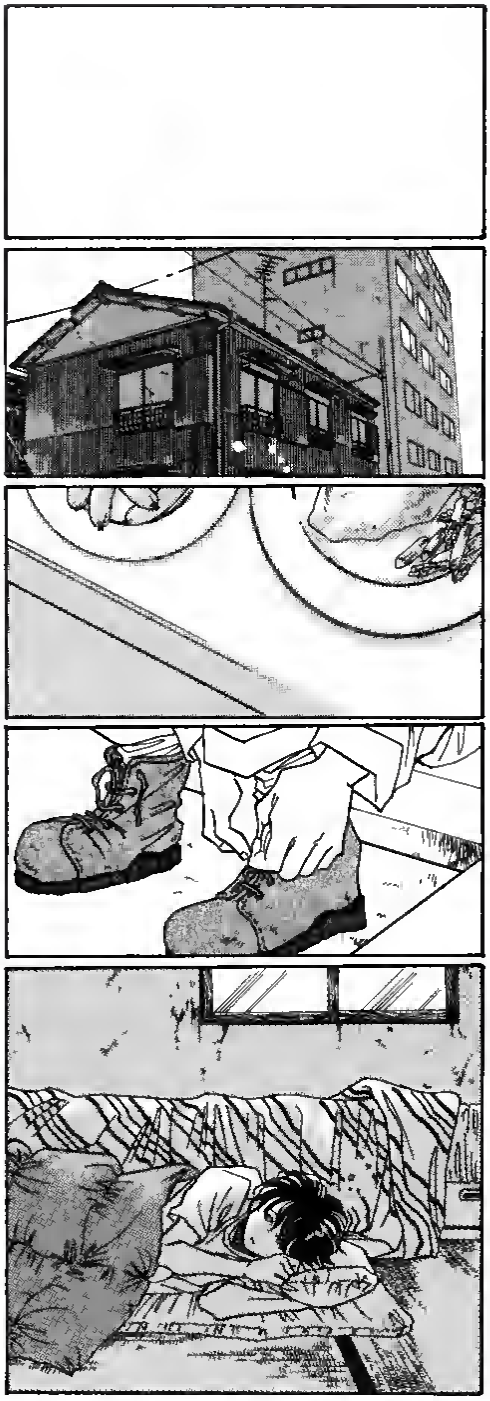

HEY, UM...
CLANK
CLANK
THIS LOCK IS KINDA WEIRD...
...HUH?
I'LL GO CHECK.
I WONDER IF THE WASHING MACHINE IS DONE YET.
OH...
IT WON'T LOCK. DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
OH, THAT'S RIGHT.
THAT'S DANGEROUS FOR A GIRL LIVING ALONE!
GET IT REPAIRED SOON.
WHAT!?
IT BROKE A WHILE AGO, SO IT'S LIKE THAT.


HEY...
IF YOU WANT...
YOU CAN LIVE HERE A WHILE.


THERE'S NO WAY YOU COULD SPEND NIGHT AFTER NIGHT AT A CAPSULE HOTEL.
YOU WON'T FIND A ROOM THAT QUICKLY.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING!?
B-BUT...
YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH MONEY FOR THAT, RIGHT?
WELL, YOU DON'T HAVE ANYWHERE TO GO, RIGHT?
YOU PROTECT ME...
IN RETURN,
INSTEAD OF THAT BROKEN LOCK.


SPLASH
IN THE END, I DECIDED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HER GOODWILL.
SUCH A TINY BATH TUB.
I'M LIKE AN ARAN-POKED CAT.
SHE WAS KIND OF STRANGE.
I HAVEN'T GOTTEN THIS FUTON OUT IN A WHILE
SORRY IF IT'S DAMP
HER NAME WAS FUJIKO ARIYOSHI.
A SO-CALLED PART-TIMER.
LIGHTS OUT
KAY
EVEN THOUGH I THOUGHT...
IT WAS A BAD IDEA...
IT WAS TRUE THAT I WAS IN A BIND.


IN THE END, I'M LETTING SOMEONE TAKE CARE OF ME.
EVEN THOUGH I LEFT FOR TOKYO...
BECAUSE I DIDN'T WANT TO BE TAKEN CARE OF BY ANYONE...



SINCE MY ROOMMATE IS A GIRL...

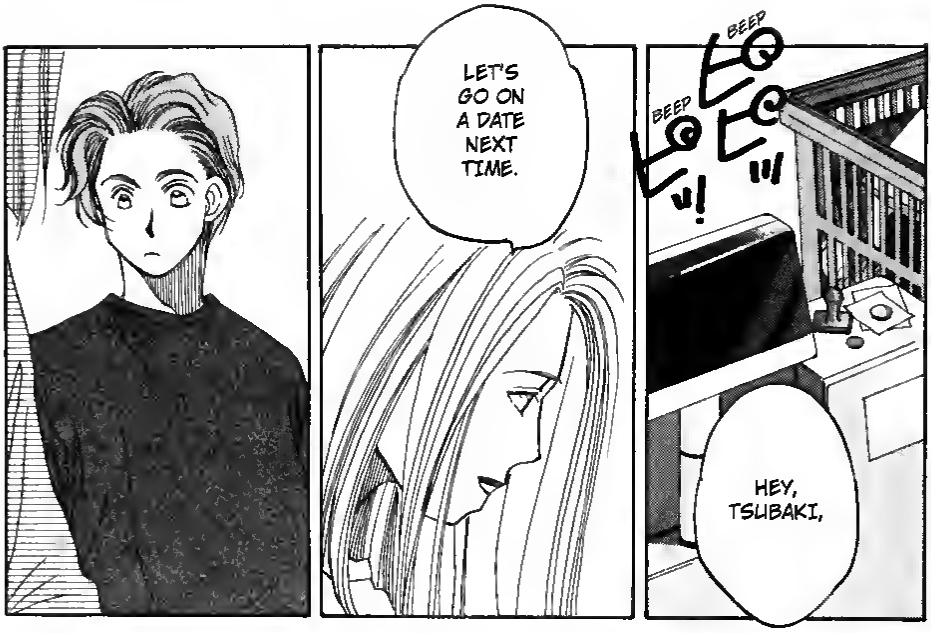
YOU'LL HAVE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT FOR ONCE, RIGHT?

I'LL BE BACK SOON!
SORRY. DID I WAKE YOU?
I MADE BREAKFAST FOR YOU. EAT IT LATER, OKAY?
CLUNK

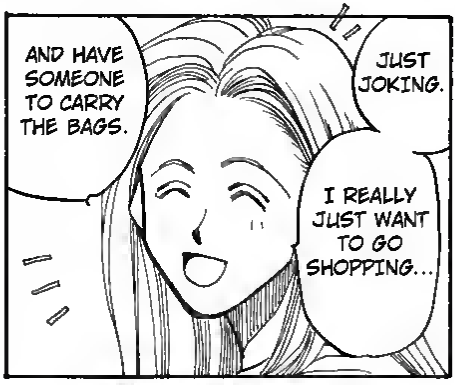
AND CALL A LOCKSMITH...
.....
I'VE GOTTA LOOK FOR MY OWN PLACE...

FUUKO,
WHY ARE YOU LIVING BY YOURSELF?

I HAVE A LOT OF SISTERS...
SO, YOU COULD SAY THAT I'VE COME TO LIKE BEING ALONE.
HUH? WELL, IT JUST KINDA HAPPENED.
LIKE HAVING A BOY FREE-LOAD OFF ME.
BESIDES, SOMETHING INTERESTING MIGHT HAPPEN, RIGHT?
...HM.
I LIKE ANY KIND OF MUSHROOMS.
DO YOU LIKE ENOKI MUSH-ROOMS?
SHIITAKE MUSHROOMS AND ENOKI MUSHROOMS.
HM, I THINK I'LL GET...
THAT'S GOOD. ♡
.....

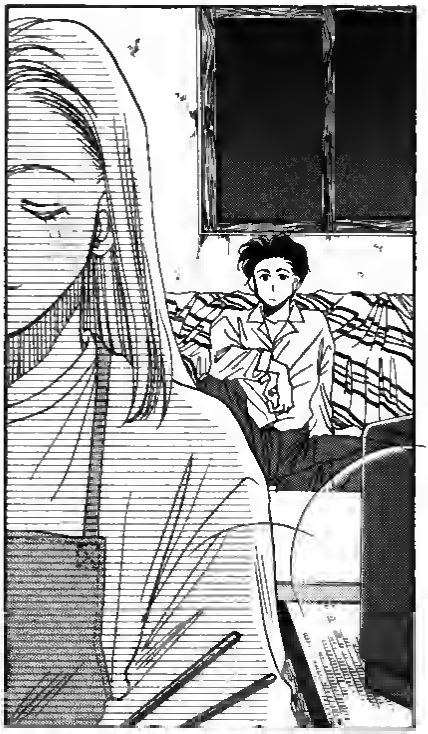


I WAS BEING HEALED.



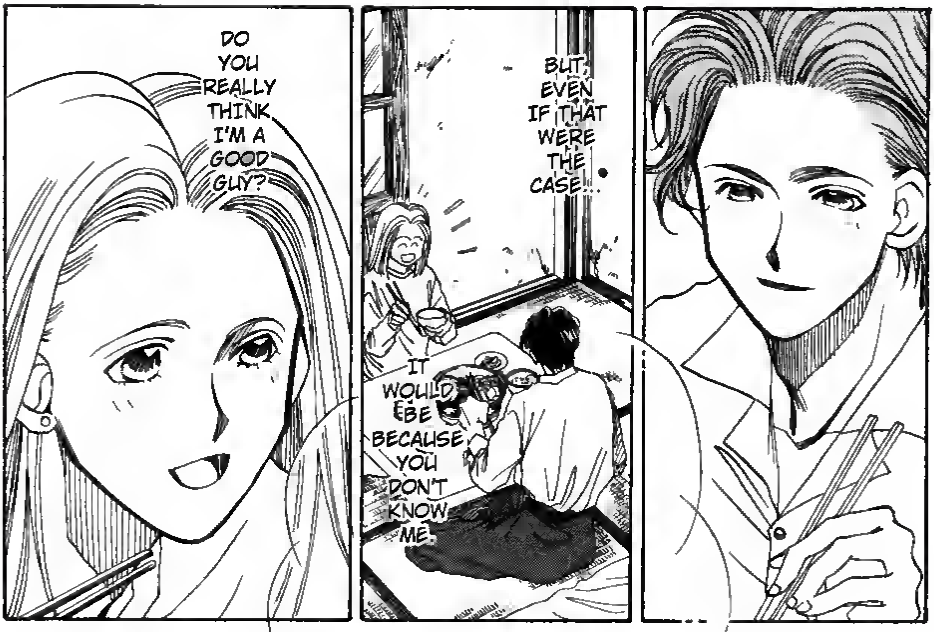
SOMEHOW DISAPPEARS FROM MY MEMORY.
AND JUST LIKE THAT, WHATEVER I HAD DONE BEFORE THIS TIME...

OH... NO.
I'M FINE.
SORRY FOR DRAGGING YOU AROUND WITH ME.
WHAT'S WRONG? ARE YOU TIRED?
I WAS JUST THINKING ABOUT THAT RIGHT NOW...
WHAT'LL I DO?!
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT THOSE BOOTS YOU COULDN'T DECIDE ON?
EVEN I SEEMED TO GET LURED IN.
——.....
FUUKO WAS ALWAYS SMILING.



FUUKO, COULD IT BE...

THAT YOU LOVE ME?



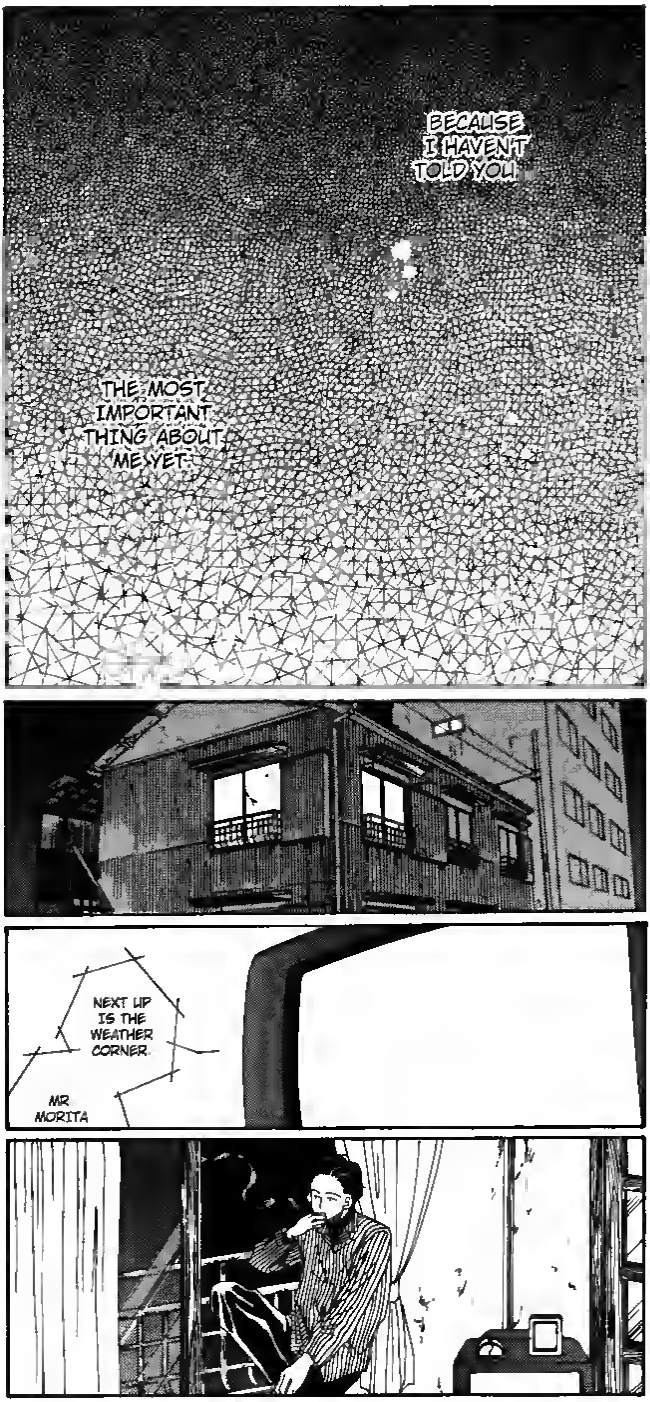
AUTHOR'S NOTES:

THE MODEL FOR FUUKO IS YURI ICHII FROM THE MUSIC GROUP EAST END x YURI...

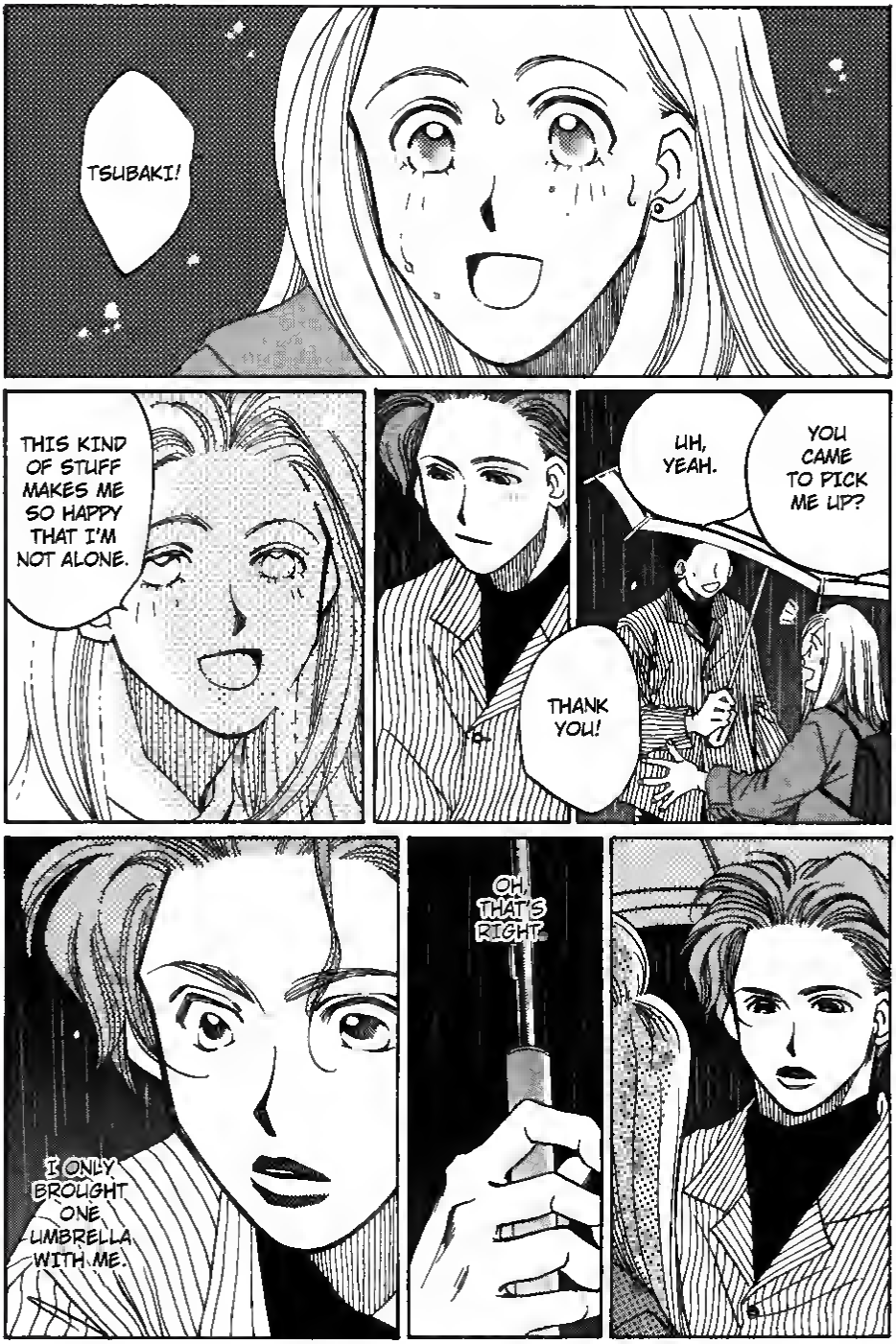
'CAUSE I THINK SHE'S SWEET AND CUTE.

HOWEVER, STREET FASHION COSTS MORE THAN YOU'D THINK FROM THE LOOKS OF IT. LIKE THE SHOES AND SUCH... IF YOU GET PREMIUM BRANDS.

BUT, I HAVE NO CLUE ABOUT THAT STUFF.

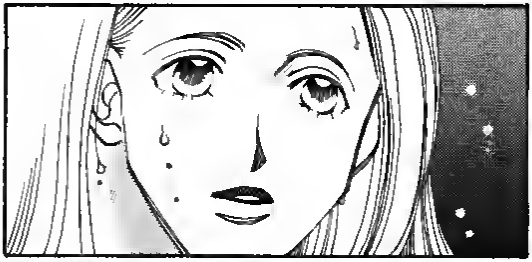


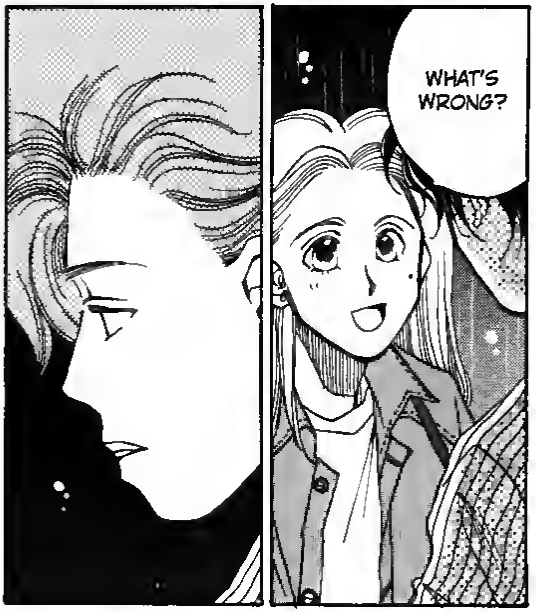
PLIP
PLOP
AAAH!
OH,
CRAP!
SCRUNCH...


TSUBAKI!
THIS KIND OF STUFF MAKES ME SO HAPPY THAT I'M NOT ALONE.
THANK YOU!
UH, YEAH.
YOU CAME TO PICK ME UP?
I ONLY BROUGHT ONE UMBRELLA WITH ME.
OH, THAT'S RIGHT.

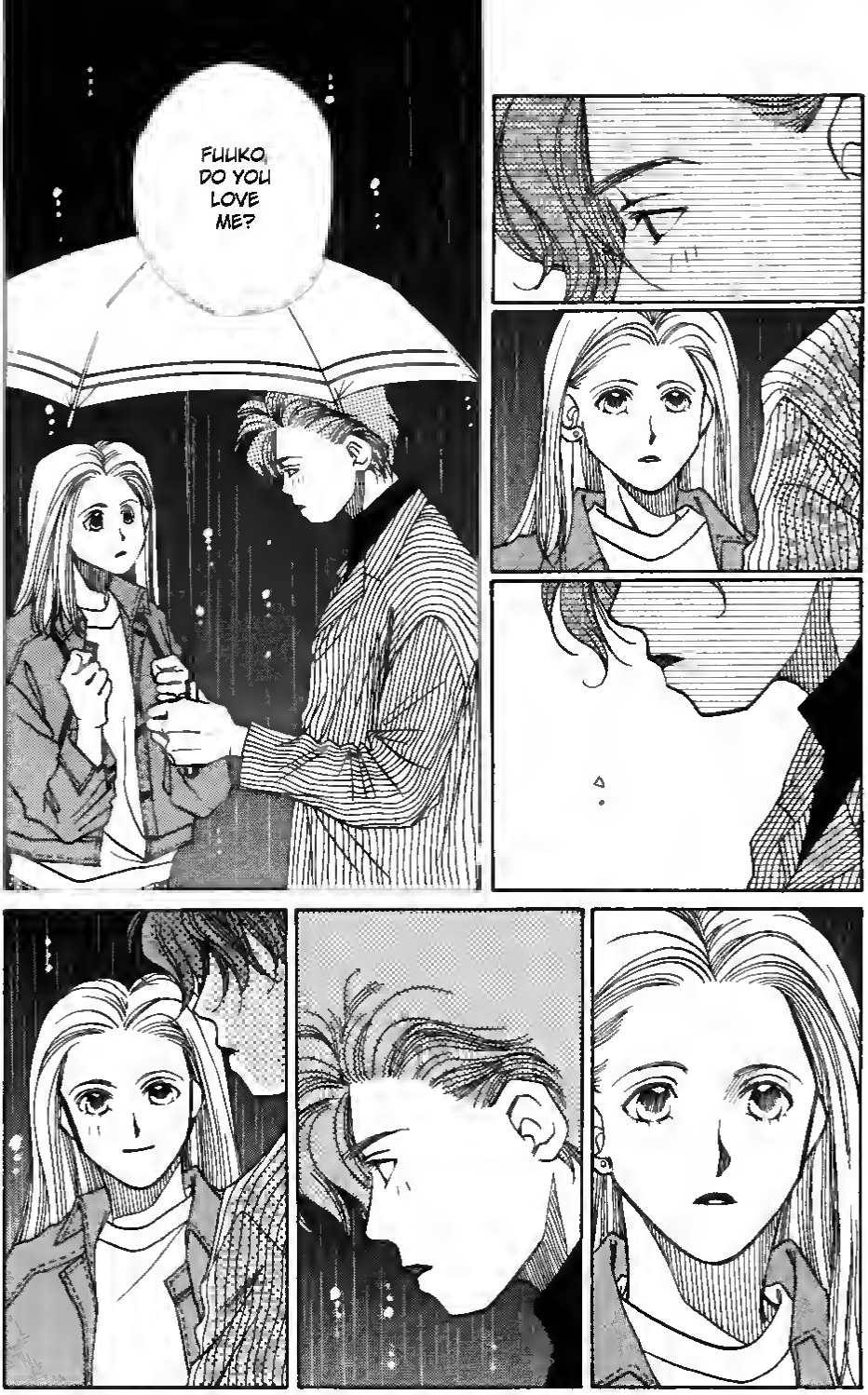
UNCON-
SCIOUSLY,
I...
IN JUST
A FEW
WEEKS,

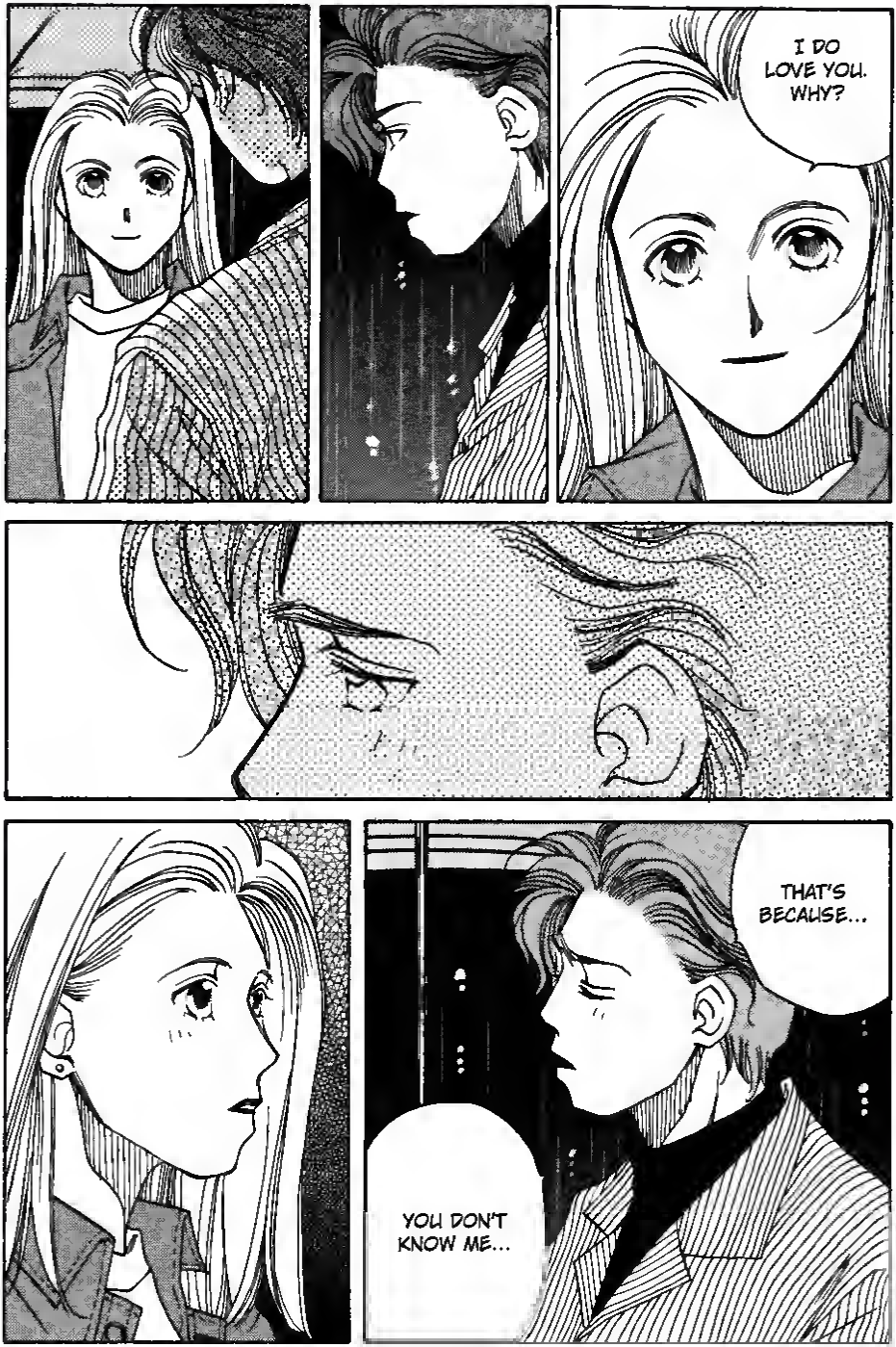
...WITH
YOU...




WHAT'S
WRONG?

UNCONSCIOUSLY...
I
WAS
THINKING
OF
WALKING
HOME
WITH YOU
UNDER
ONE
UMBRELLA.

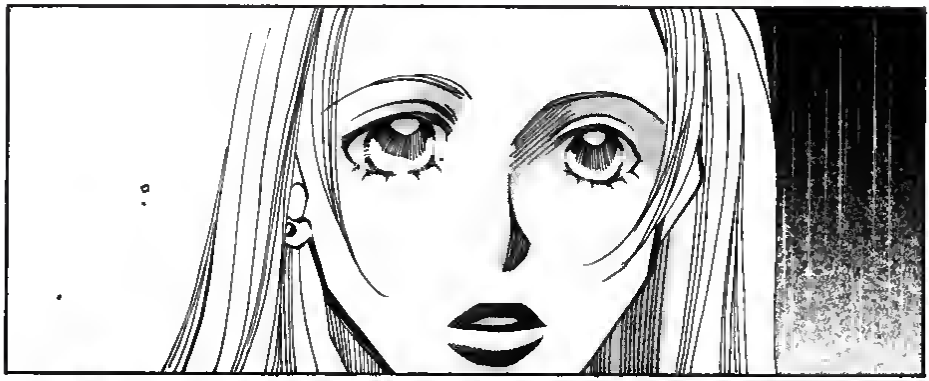

FUUKO, DO YOU LOVE ME?

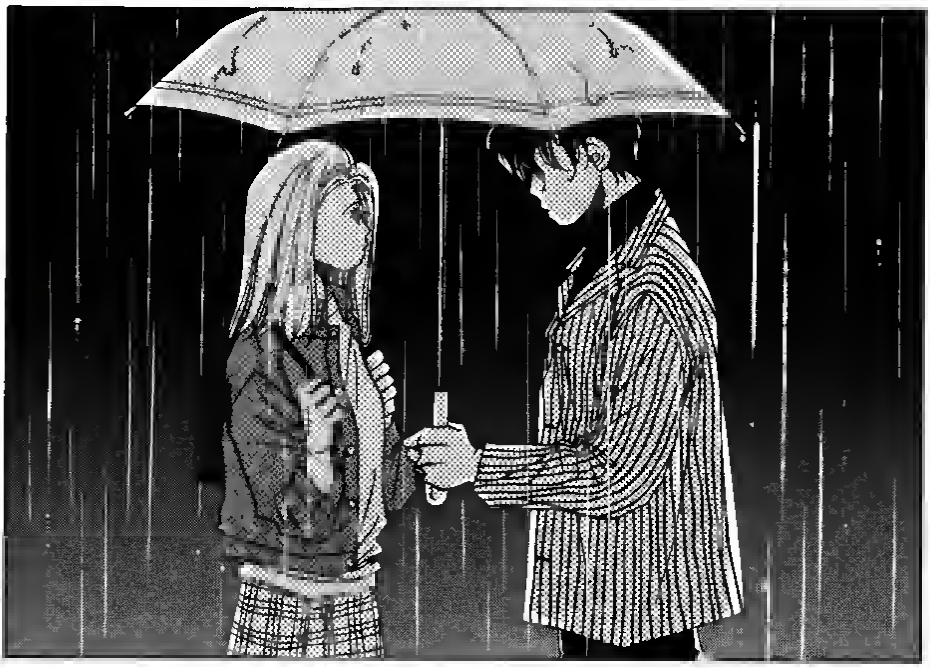

I DO LOVE YOU. WHY?
THAT'S BECAUSE...
YOU DON'T KNOW ME...

I...
FOR THREE YEARS IN HIGH SCHOOL...
—.....

I WAS...
IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH A GUY...

CHAPTER 10: THE KEY TO FUUKO'S PLACE - PART 2





AUTHOR'S NOTES

• TRIVIAL TALK - PART 1 •

IN CHAPTER 7 KOU SAYS, "I KICKED YOU," BUT THE JAPANESE PHRASE THAT HE USES, "KEPPAKUITA," SEEMS TO BE A DIALECT... I DIDN'T KNOW UNTIL MY SUPERVISOR TOLD ME. I ALWAYS SAID STUFF LIKE, "I GREW UP IN THE CITY, SO I AM A LITTLE JEALOUS OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE A DIALECT," WITHOUT KNOWING I HAD ONE MYSELF. HOW SHOCKING.

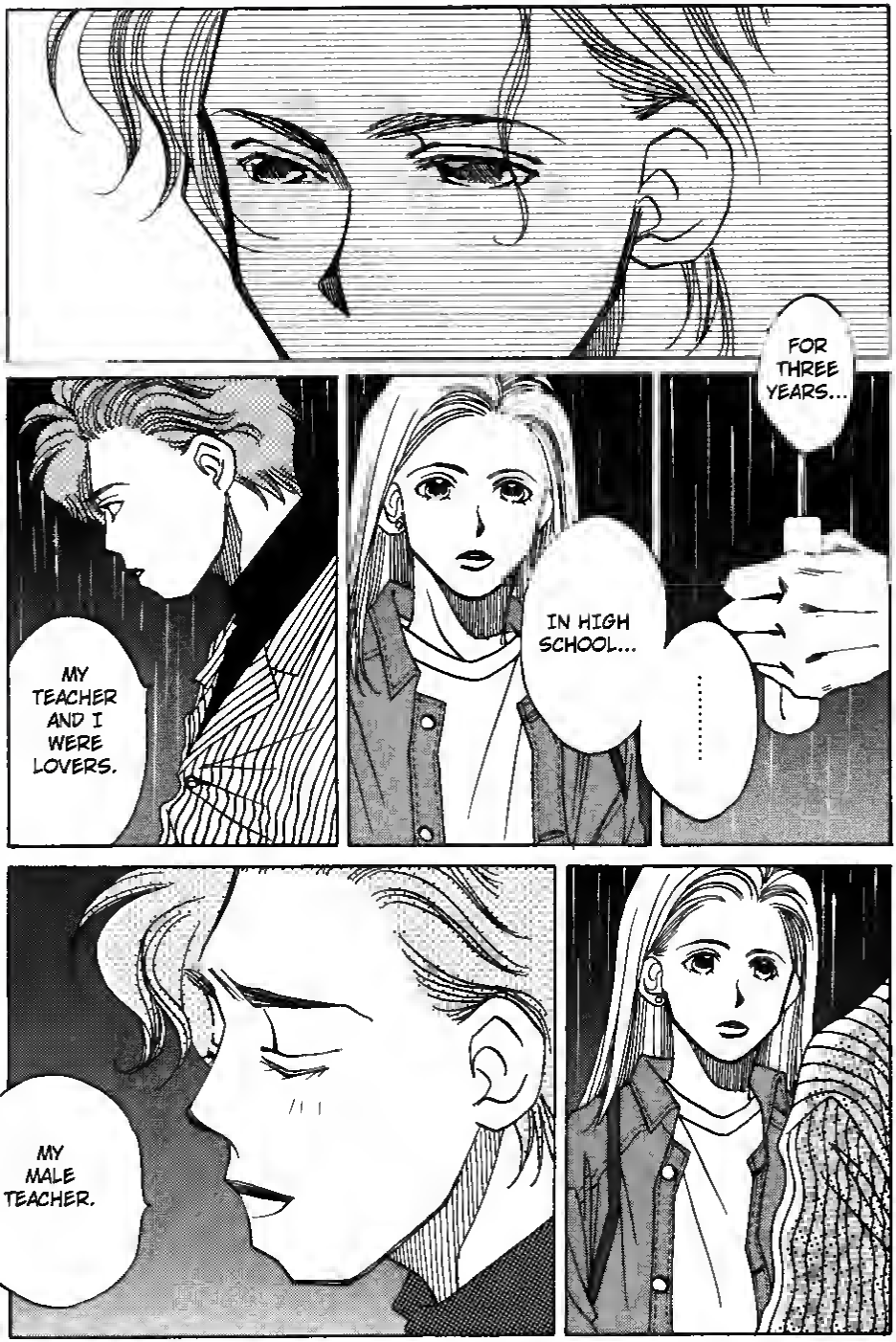
KOU IS FROM YOKOHAMA, SO HE USES THE SAME TYPE OF LANGUAGE AS ME.

SO, NOW I HAVE LOST CONFIDENCE IN MY REGION'S LANGUAGE. WELL, WHAT ABOUT "-JAN KA" (ISN'T IT)? DOESN'T EVERYONE USE THAT?

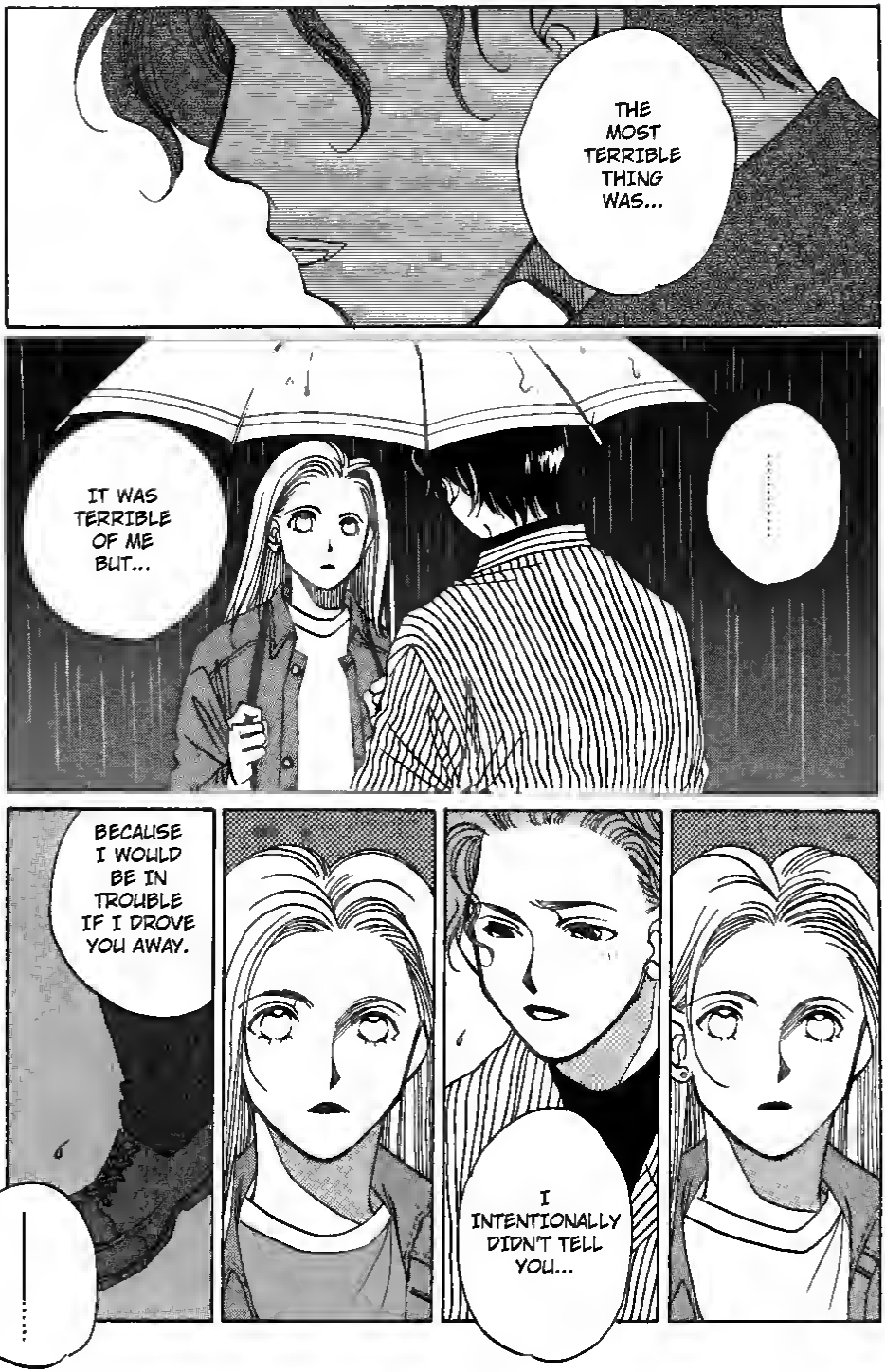
EX.)

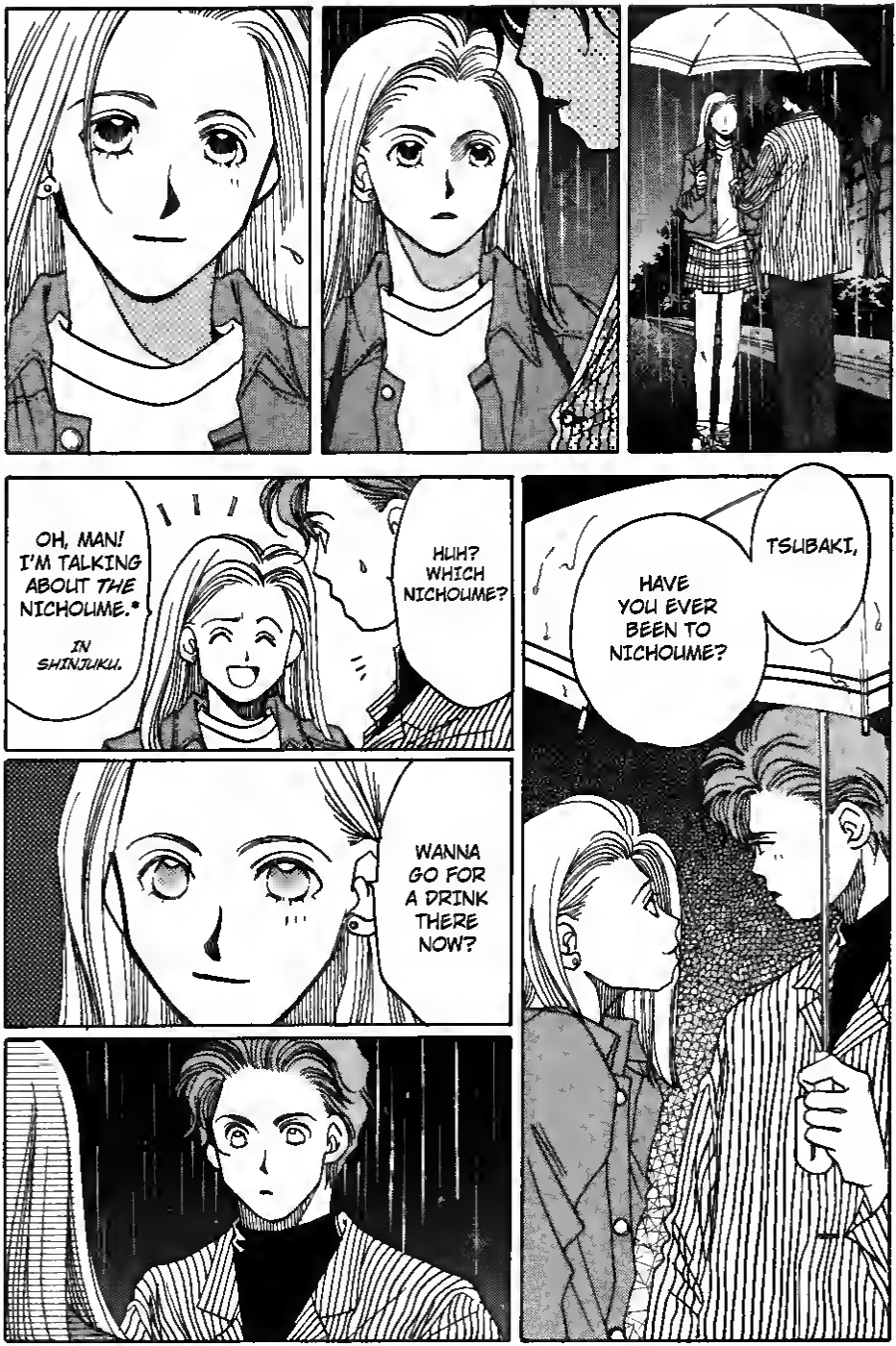
II JAN KA?
(IT'S FINE, ISN'T IT?)
KANKEI NAI JAN KA YO.
(IT DOESN'T MATTER, DOES IT?)

ALL BOYS USE THAT. RIGHT?


FOR THREE YEARS...
IN HIGH SCHOOL...
.....
MY TEACHER AND I WERE LOVERS.
MY MALE TEACHER.

AND EVERYTHING KIND OF DESCENDED INTO MAYHEM.
MY PARENTS FOUND OUT ABOUT IT...
IT WAS HORRIBLE.
MY FATHER DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH MY MOTHER...
MY MOTHER DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH HER PERVERTED SON...
I RAN AWAY AND CAME HERE.
SO THEN...
I THOUGHT I WOULD DISAPPEAR...


THE MOST TERRIBLE THING WAS...
IT WAS TERRIBLE OF ME BUT...
.....
BECAUSE I WOULD BE IN TROUBLE IF I DROVE YOU AWAY.
I INTENTIONALLY DIDN'T TELL YOU...
.....


TSUBAKI,
HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO NICHOUME?
HUH? WHICH NICHOUME?
OH, MAN! I'M TALKING ABOUT THE NICHOUME.*
IN SHINJUKU.
WANNA GO FOR A DRINK THERE NOW?

*NICHOUME IS AN AREA IN THE SHINJUKU WARD OF TOKYO FAMOUS FOR ITS HIGH CONCENTRATION OF GAY BARS

BORN IN A TOWWWN
WITHOUT SEEEASONS
WELL, NOW. FUUKO, LONG TIME NO SEE.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE, HUH?
WOOHOO! CLASSY CHOICE, KOUTAROU!
RAISED ON HILLS WITHOUT WIIIND

UH... HUH...
HE USED TO BRING ME HERE OFTEN.
ONE OF MY MALE FRIENDS IN VOCATIONAL SCHOOL WAS GAY.
YEP.
WOW! IT REALLY IS ONLY GUYS.
WELL, I...
WHAAP!
UNBELIEVABLE! IF YOU'RE GAY, THEN THIS SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE FIRST PLACE YOU VISITED IN TOKYO.
I LEFT MY HOME WITHOUT DREAMS
AND MEET PEOPLE WITHOUT LOVE

I'VE HEARD RUMORS HE HAS A PRETTY GOOD PERSONALITY TOO.
I SEE HIM AROUND A LOT.
HE'S COOL, HUH?
WHAT!? REALLY?
WOULDN'T YOU KNOW IT? HE'S A STUDENT AT KEIO UNIVERSITY.
HOW AWESOME!
IS HE YOUR TYPE?
AWESOME, HUH?
HEY, TSUBAKI, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF HIM?
OH, MAN. STOP IT.
I'M SINGING A CLASSY SONG!
SHIGERU IZUMIYA, HUH?
THAT BRINGS BACK MEMORIES!
"YOU GUYS GOTTA RAISE SOME FUNDS FOR CHARITY!!"
HA HA HA HA!
HOORAY!
やんや
GET ALONG WITH SOMEONE LIKE THAT.
SOMEONE LIKE THAT WHO'S GOOD-LOOKING, SMART, AND CHARISMATIC...
HE EVEN SINGS WELL...
I WOULDN'T...

ANYWAY, PEOPLE THAT EVERYONE SAYS ARE GOOD PEOPLE...
A LIFE FULL OF MISTAKES LIKE MINE.
HE PROBABLY WOULDN'T UNDER-STAND...
OR WHAT THEY'RE THINKING, RIGHT?
ABOUT THEM-SELVES...
ARE JUST PEOPLE WHO DON'T TALK MUCH...
I WOULDN'T GET ALONG... WITH HIM...
I THINK IT'S GOOD AND ADMIRABLE, BUT...
JUST MAKING THINGS FUN FOR EVERYONE ELSE...

MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE YOU WOULDN'T GET ALONG...
.....
OR MAYBE YOU'RE JUST PUTTING UP BARRIERS?
EVERY-THING ENDS TODAY...
EVERY-THING CHANGES TODAY...
EVERY-THING PAYS OFF TODAY...
EVERY-THING STARTS TODAY...
TSUBAKI...
YOU STOPPED PUTTING UP...
BARRIERS WITH ME, RIGHT?

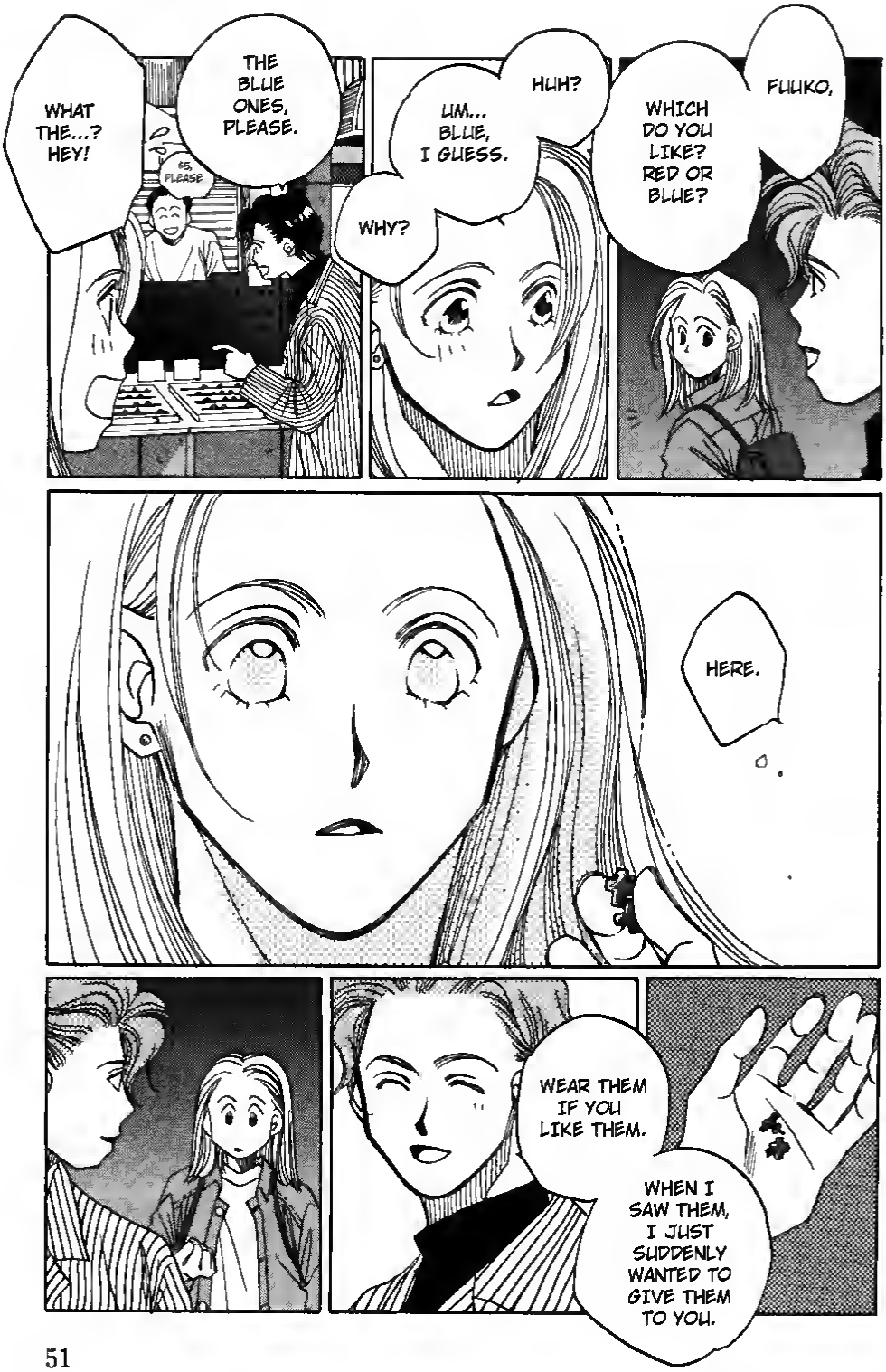
EVERYTHING ENDS TODAY
EVERYTHING CHANGES TODAY
EVERY-THING STARTS...
EVERY-THING PAYS OFF TODAY.

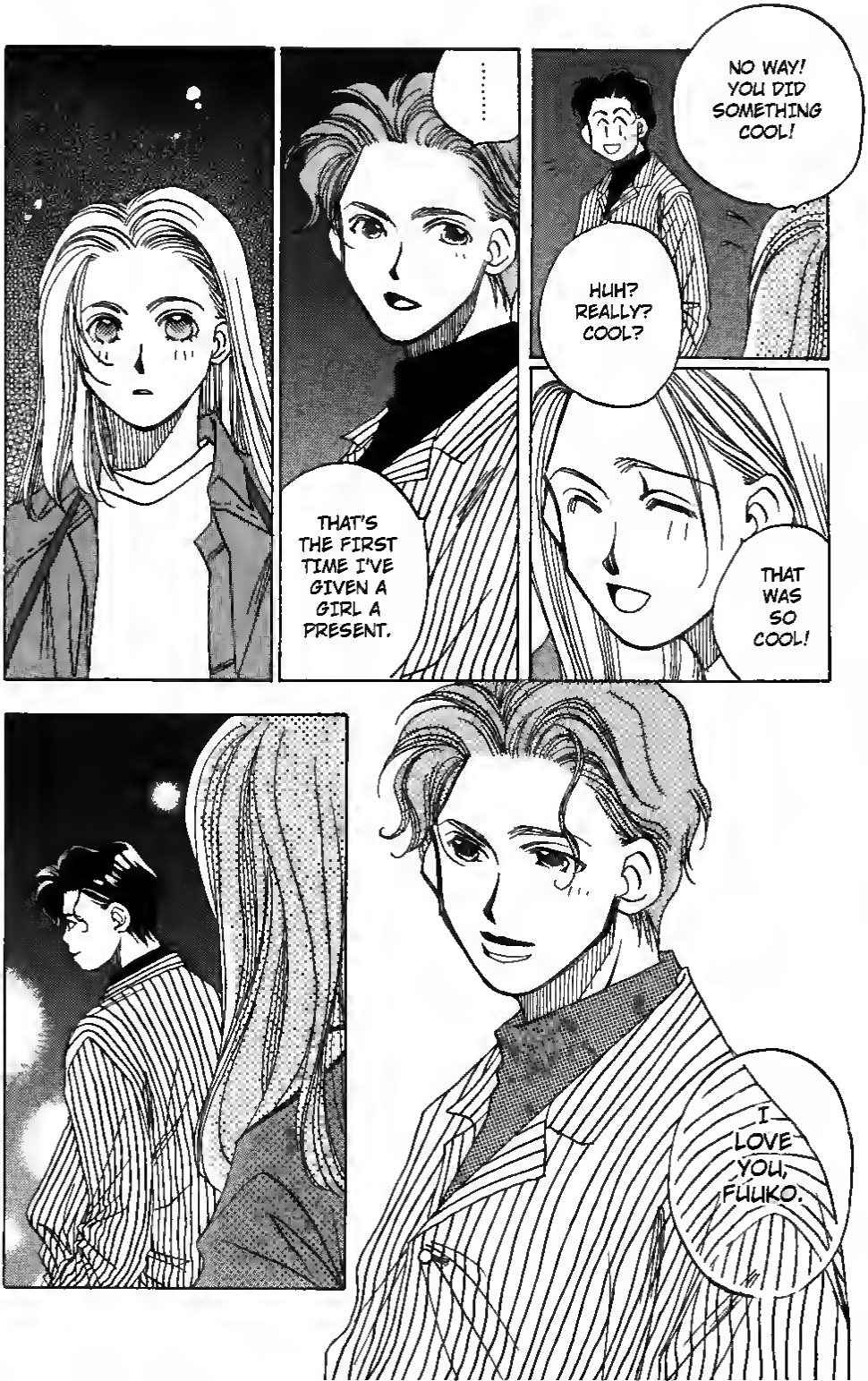
THE RAIN'S STOPPED!
TODAY.
WE'RE SO LUCKY.
YEP.
SOMEHOW EVERYONE...
WAS COMPLETELY NORMAL.
WHAT DID YOU THINK?
UH... YEAH.
I'D HEARD OF NICHOLIME SOMEWHERE BEFORE, BUT...

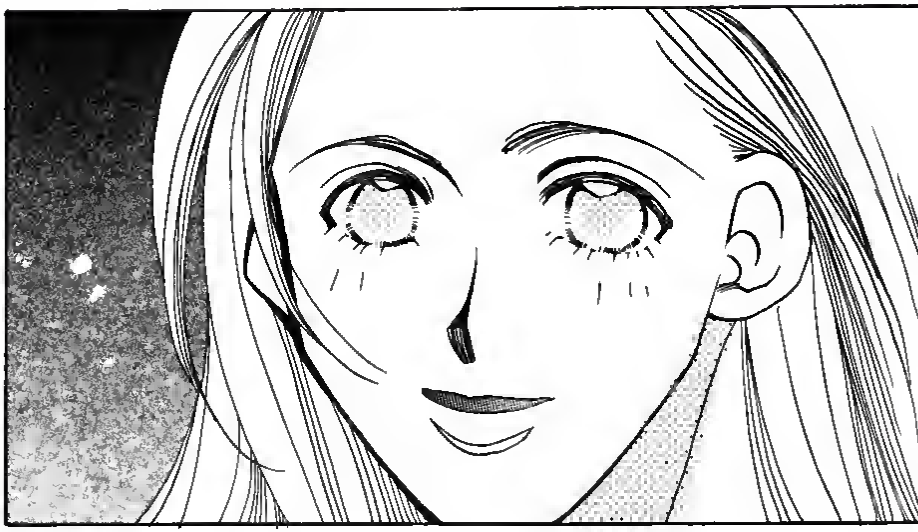
YOU'RE NOT TERRIBLE AT ALL.
YOU'RE WAY MORE NORMAL...
THAN YOU THINK YOU ARE.
YOU'RE NORMAL TOO.

AH, YEAH.
TSUBAKI,
YOU ASKED ME WHY I LIVE ALONE, RIGHT?
HUH?
YOU SEE, MY MOTHER REMARRIED WHEN I WAS IN HIGH SCHOOL...
AND THE GUY HAD THREE DAUGHTERS.
YOU SAID YOU HAD A LOT OF SISTERS...
RIGHT. I HAVE THREE.
BUT THEY'RE ALL MY CURRENT FATHER'S DAUGHTERS.
MAN, HAVE I GONE BAD.
HA HA HA!
IT'S SUCH A PAIN RIGHT?

I HATE THEM ALL.
WHAT A SAD, DEPRESSING FAMILY!
YOU TOLD ME ABOUT YOURSELF, SO...
I'M RETURNING THE FAVOR.


WHAT THE...? HEY!
THE BLUE ONES, PLEASE.
YES, PLEASE
HUH?
UM... BLUE, I GUESS.
WHY?
FUUKO,
WHICH DO YOU LIKE? RED OR BLUE?
HERE.
WEAR THEM IF YOU LIKE THEM.
WHEN I SAW THEM, I JUST SUDDENLY WANTED TO GIVE THEM TO YOU.


NO WAY! YOU DID SOMETHING COOL!
HUH? REALLY? COOL?
THAT WAS SO COOL!
.....
THAT'S THE FIRST TIME I'VE GIVEN A GIRL A PRESENT.
I LOVE YOU, FUUKO.



BY THE WAY, FUUKO,

I NEVER ONCE WENT OUT TO LOOK FOR AN APARTMENT.

AND YOU NEVER TRIED TO FIX THAT LOCK.

IF I ASKED, YOU'D SURELY SMILE AND SAY YOU FORGOT, RIGHT?

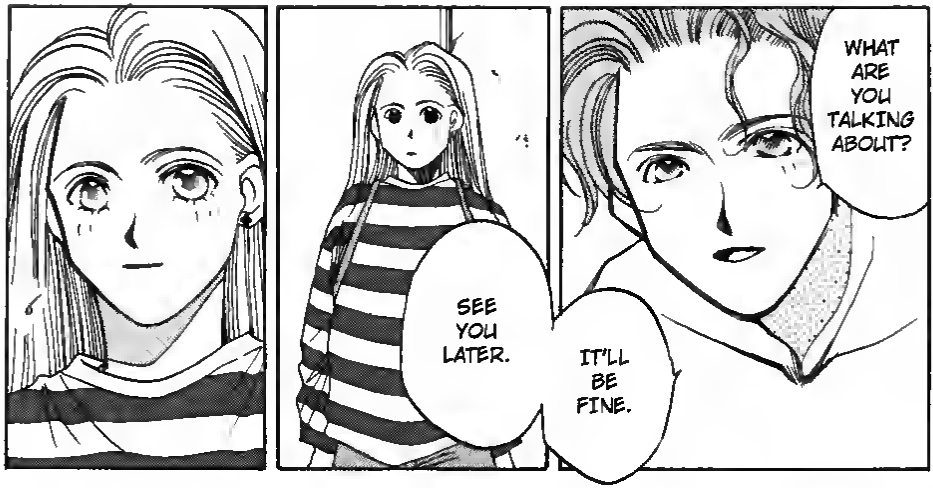
BUT, THAT'S NOT REALLY THE CASE, IS IT?

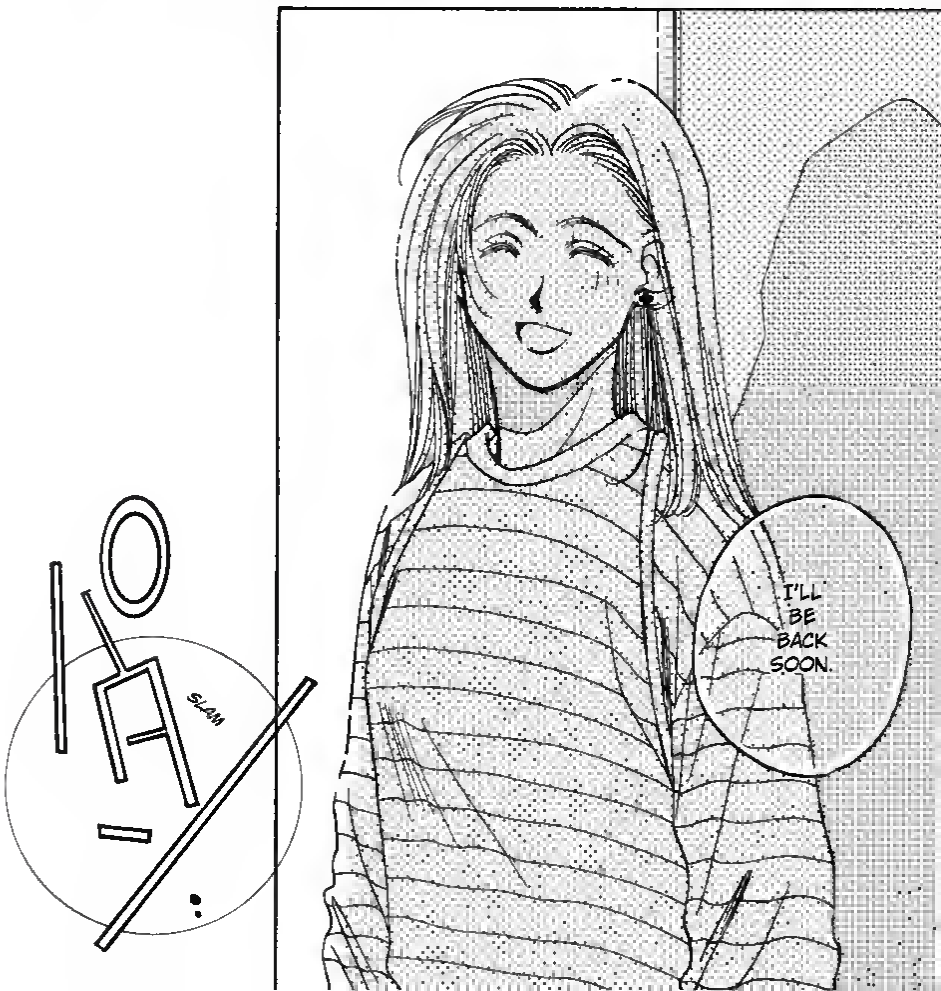
IT HASN'T MATTERED FOR A VERY LONG TIME, RIGHT?
YET...
BEFORE WE COULD TALK ABOUT ALL THAT...
IT ALWAYS HAPPENS THAT I GET SWEPT AWAY BY SOMEONE.
WE HAD GIVEN OURSELVES TO EACH OTHER.

FUUKO, NOW...
I'LL LEAVE EVERYTHING TO YOU.

THE EARRINGS LOOK GOOD ON YOU.
THEY'RE CUTE.
REALLY? YAY!
LEAVING ALREADY?
YEAH, TODAY I HAVE THE EARLY SHIFT.

HUH?
...YOU'LL STAY HERE, RIGHT?
WELL, SOME-HOW...
YOU SEEM LIKE YOU MIGHT SUDDENLY TURN AROUND AND GO OFF SOMEWHERE.
DON'T YOU GO...
RUNNING AWAY FROM HERE ALL BY YOURSELF.


WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
IT'LL BE FINE.
SEE YOU LATER.


I'LL BE BACK SOON.
SLAM

AUTHOR'S NOTES:
• TRIVIAL TALK PART 2 •

I AM SOOOO BAD AT REMEMBERING FACES. IN MOST CASES, I DON'T REMEMBER ANYONE I MET OR SPOKE TO EVEN TEN MINUTES AGO. ALSO, I END UP MAKING A LOT OF MISTAKES.

I'VE MET SOMEONE AT A PARTY, THEN HAD NO IDEA WHO THEY WERE AT THE NEXT PARTY. I'VE COMPLETELY IGNORED THE APARTMENT MANAGER (SOMEHOW I GOT IT INTO MY HEAD THAT HE WAS HANDING OUT LEAFLETS FOR PORN, SO I WALKED RIGHT PAST HIM... AND HE EVEN LIVES RIGHT ABOVE ME...).

IT'S SO BAD. IT REALLY IS.

I CONSIDERED WHY I CAN'T REMEMBER PEOPLE.

WHEN I THOUGHT ABOUT IT, I REALIZED THAT I REMEMBER PEOPLE THAT I SEE ON TV OR IN MAGAZINES WELL ENOUGH.

WHY DOESN'T IT WORK WITH PEOPLE I MEET DIRECTLY...?

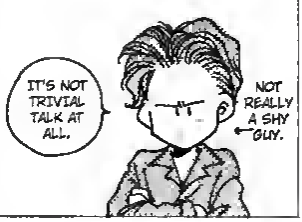
IN REALITY, I'M A SHY PERSON (HA!). IT'S TRUE. BUT, I DON'T WANT PEOPLE TO THINK THAT ABOUT ME, SO I CHAT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE WITH PEOPLE THE FIRST TIME I MEET THEM AT THE VERY LEAST.

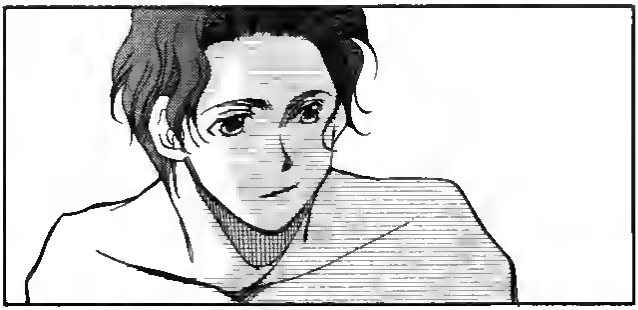
MY MOUTH MOVES, BUT MY EYES DON'T SEE THE PERSON IN FRONT OF ME.

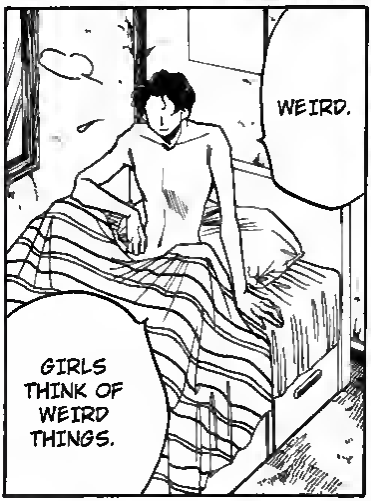
IT'S NO GOOD TO *PRETEND* NOT TO BE SHY! YOU JUST HAVE TO FIX BEING SHY!!

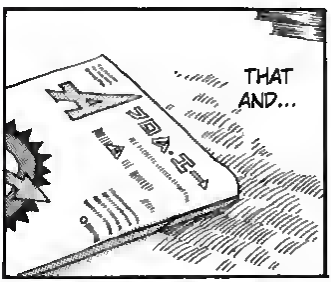
...I CAN'T DO IT.

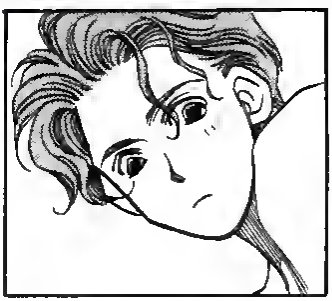
BUT, I'LL TRY...

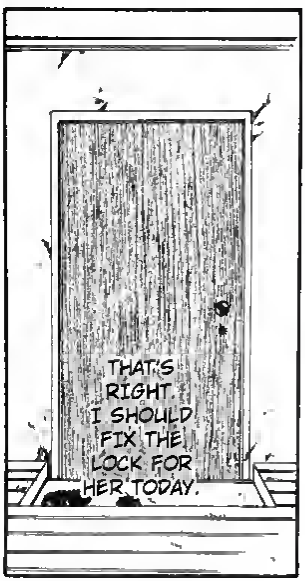




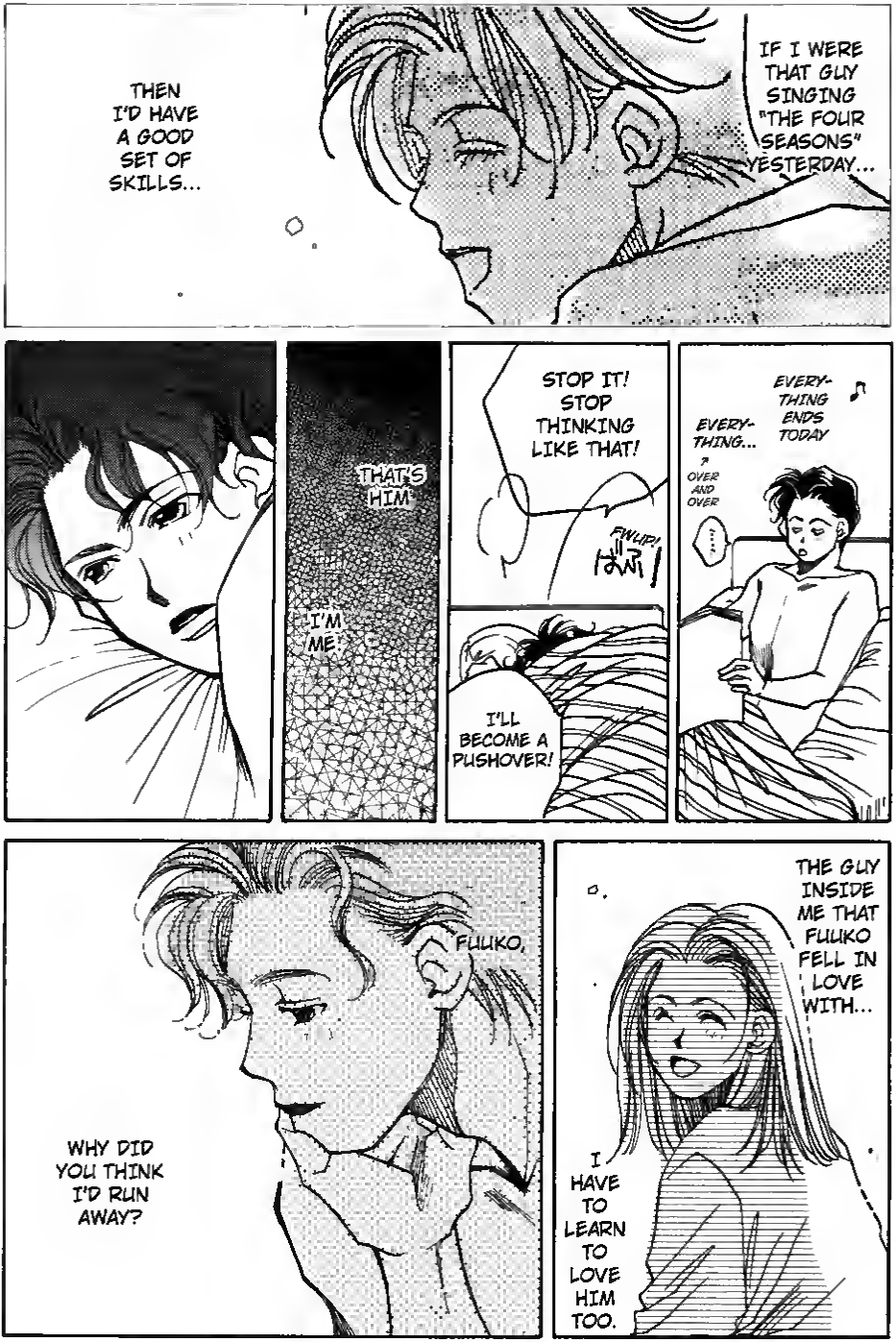


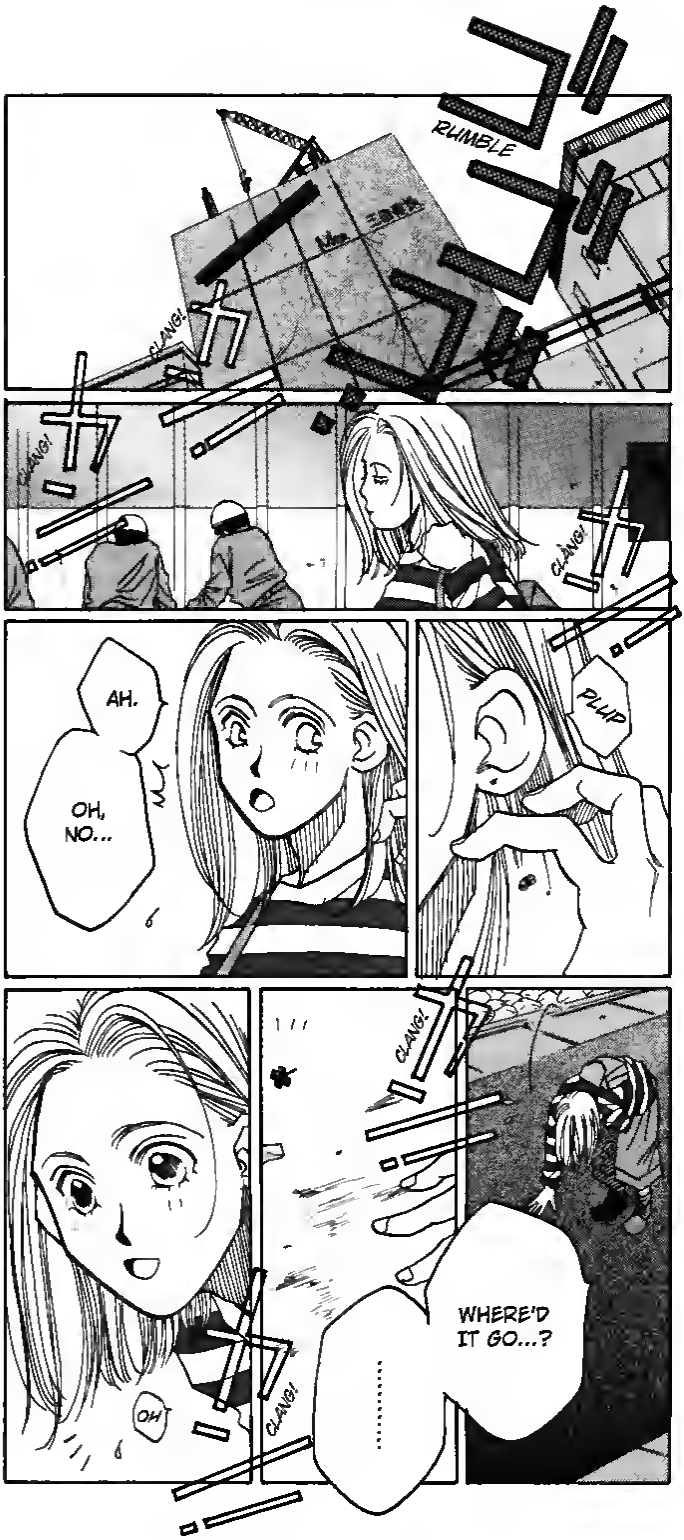






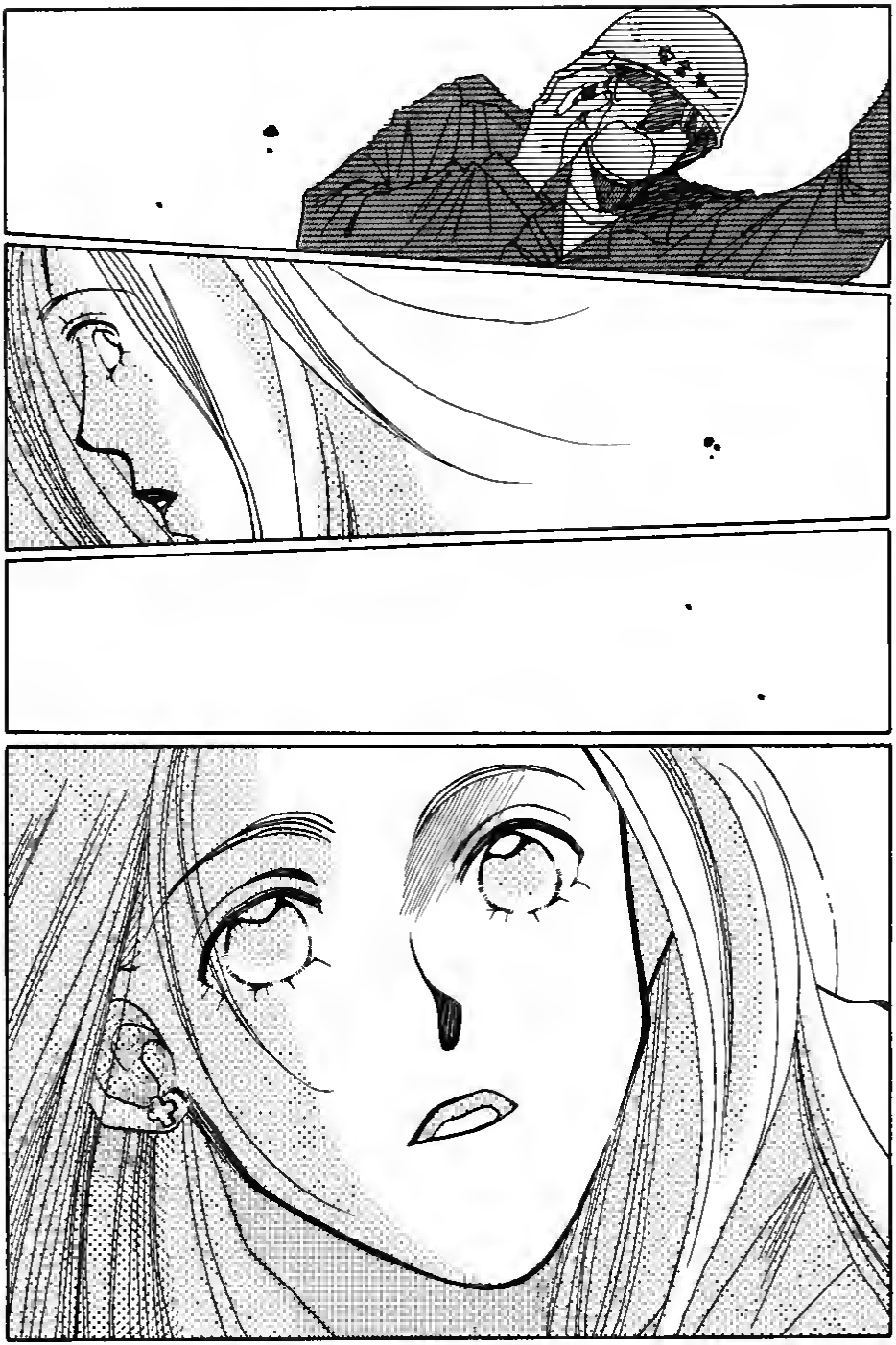
SOMEHOW OR ANOTHER, IT'S ALREADY BEEN A WHOLE MONTH.
I EVEN LET HER PROVIDE FOR ME HUH?
LIKE A GIGOLO OR SOMETHING...
I HAVE TO LOOK FOR A JOB. I HAVE TO WORK.
JOB LISTINGS
THAT'S RIGHT. A JOB.
HURRY
I REALLY AM WORTHLESS.
...WHEN I PUT IT LIKE THAT, I CAN'T DO ANYTHING, HUH?
I'M BAD AT BEING CONSIDERATE...
AND I DON'T KNOW HOW TO GET THINGS DONE.
WHAT CAN I DO?
I WONDER WHAT I SHOULD LOOK FOR?

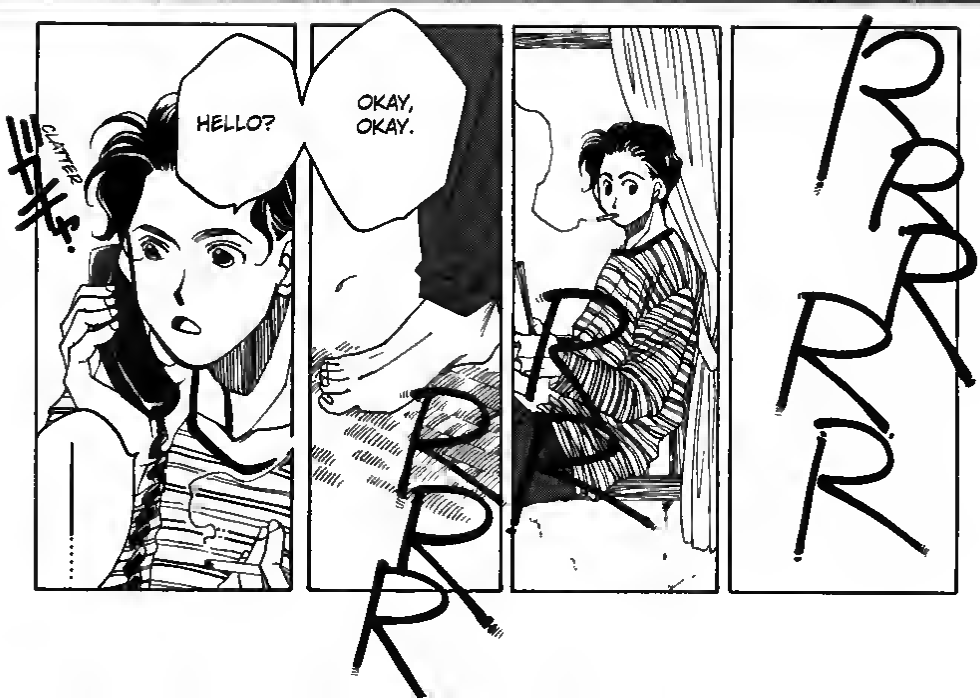

THEN I'D HAVE A GOOD SET OF SKILLS...
IF I WERE THAT GUY SINGING "THE FOUR SEASONS" YESTERDAY...
THAT'S HIM
I'M ME.
STOP IT! STOP THINKING LIKE THAT!
PHILIP!
I'LL BECOME A PUSHOVER!
EVERY-THING...
OVER AND OVER
EVERY-THING ENDS TODAY
FUUKO,
WHY DID YOU THINK I'D RUN AWAY?
THE GUY INSIDE ME THAT FUUKO FELL IN LOVE WITH...
I HAVE TO LEARN TO LOVE HIM TOO.



THIS IS NOT GOING TO BE LIKE TAKASAKI.

...RIGHT?




RRRRR
RRRRR
OKAY, OKAY.
HELLO?
CLATTER
ガチャ
……

I'M NOT... A FAMILY MEMBER...
HUH? NO...
UH... YES, MS. ARIYOSHI'S RESIDENCE.
.....HUH?
I'M JUST HOUSE-SITTING FOR A WHILE.
IN THE HOSPITAL?

...WHO IS?
...WHO IS...
...DEAD?

CHAPTER 11: THE ANGEL'S LAST WORDS

TODAY AT APPROXIMATELY 9:30 A.M.
ONE PERSON IS REPORTED DEAD AND ONE PERSON SUSTAINED SERIOUS INJURY.
A STEEL BEAM FELL AT A CONSTRUCTION SITE IN HYAKUNINCHO, SHINJUKU...
I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN ANYTHING, HAVE I?

THE PERSON WHO DIED WAS AN UNEMPLOYED RESIDENT OF HYAKUNINCHOU IN SHINJUKU, FUUKO ARIYOSHI, AGE 21.
ALSO, ONE OF THE WORKERS-
CLICK
CLANK

MORGUE 2
合病院

CLUNK

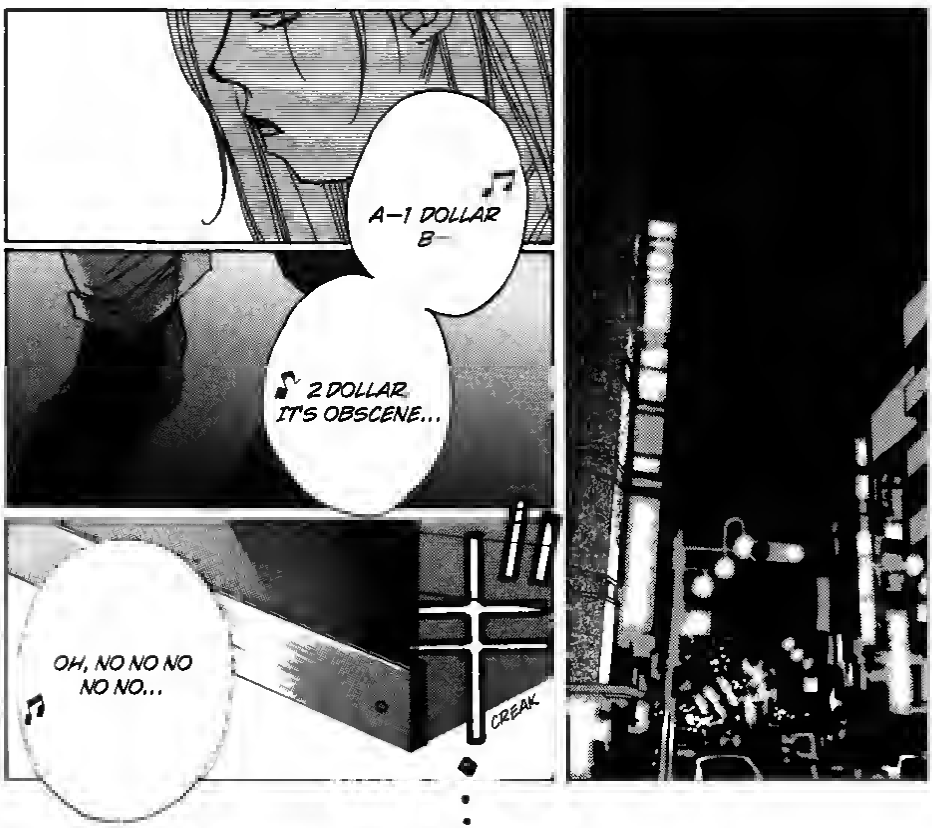
FUJIKO'S...
MOTHER.
MORGUE 2
WHAT DO I DO WHEN I SEE HER...?

HOW DO I GREET HER?
SOMEONE LIKE ME...
NOT TO MENTION...
WOULD ANY PARENT BE HAPPY TO KNOW...
THAT THEIR DAUGHTER WHO JUST DIED WAS DYING WITH A GUY?
.
.
.

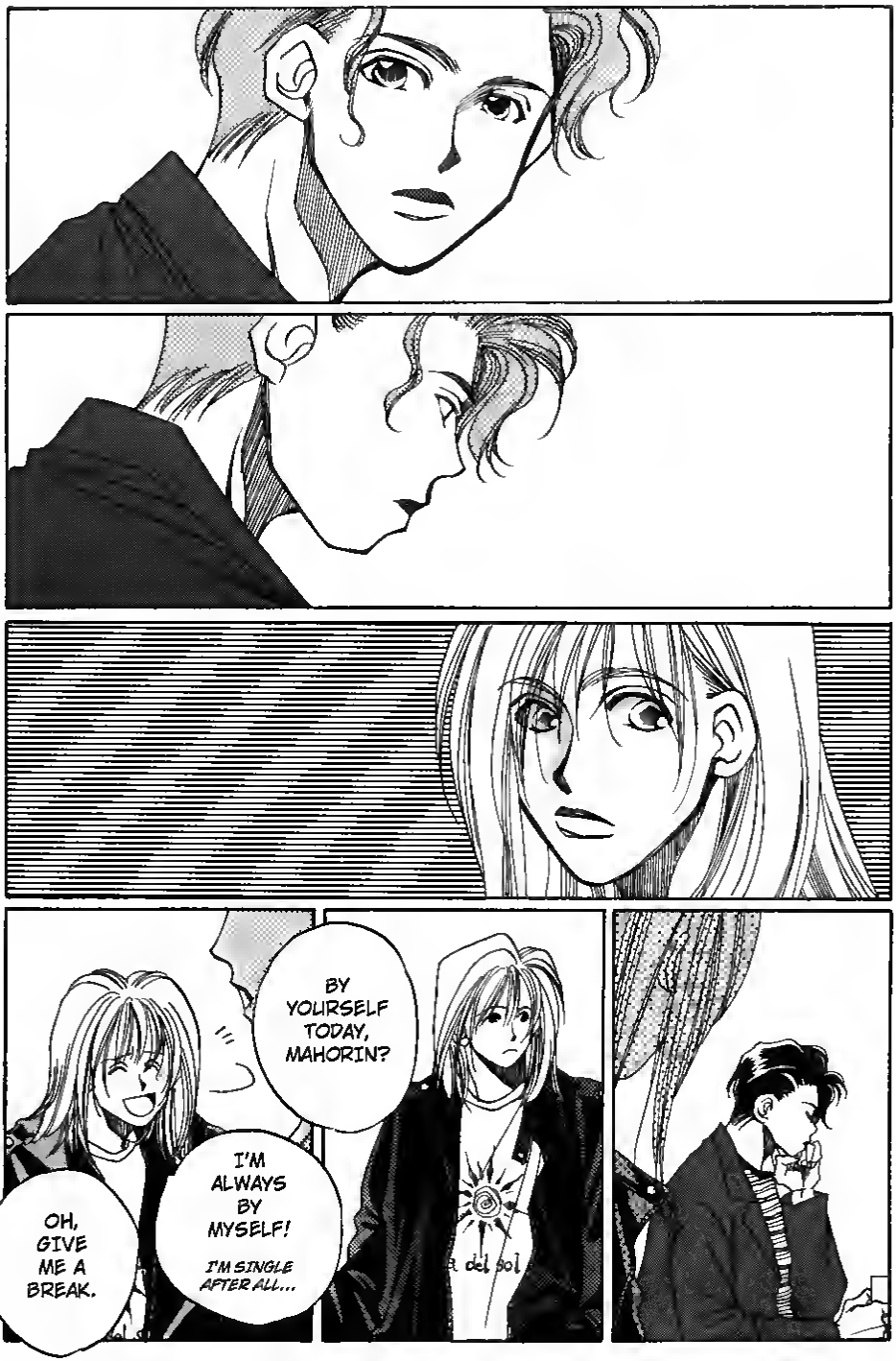
RUNNING AWAY LIKE THIS...

WHAT WAS THE LAST THING...

SHE SAID...?

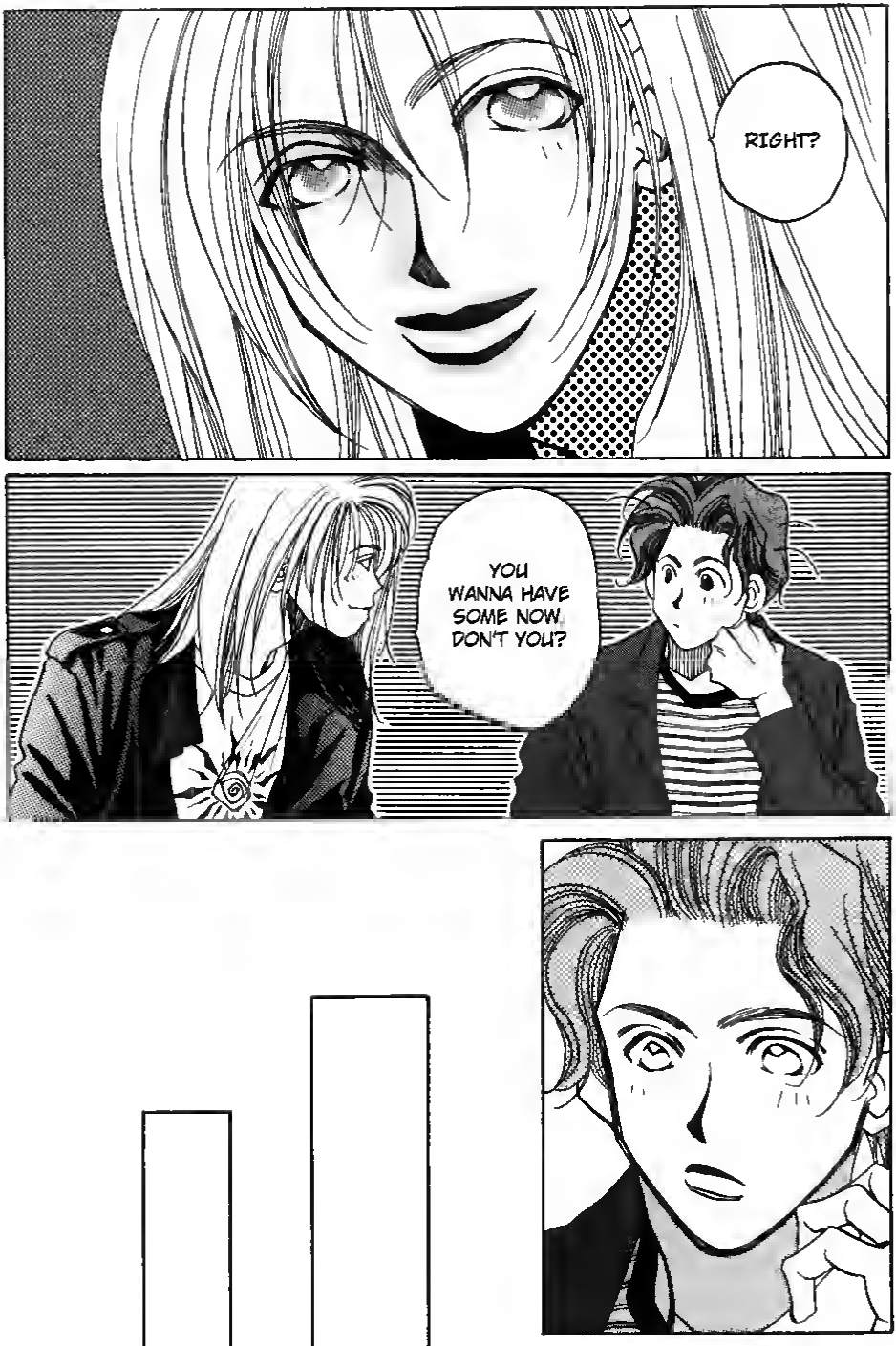

A—1 DOLLAR
B—
2 DOLLAR
IT'S OBSCENE...
OH, NO NO NO
NO NO...
CREAK

YO!
IT'S MAHORIN!
OH.
THEY'RE NOT HERE YET...
WHERE'S THE GANG?
YO.
COME ON IN.


BY YOURSELF TODAY, MAHORIN?
I'M ALWAYS BY MYSELF!
I'M SINGLE AFTER ALL...
OH, GIVE ME A BREAK.

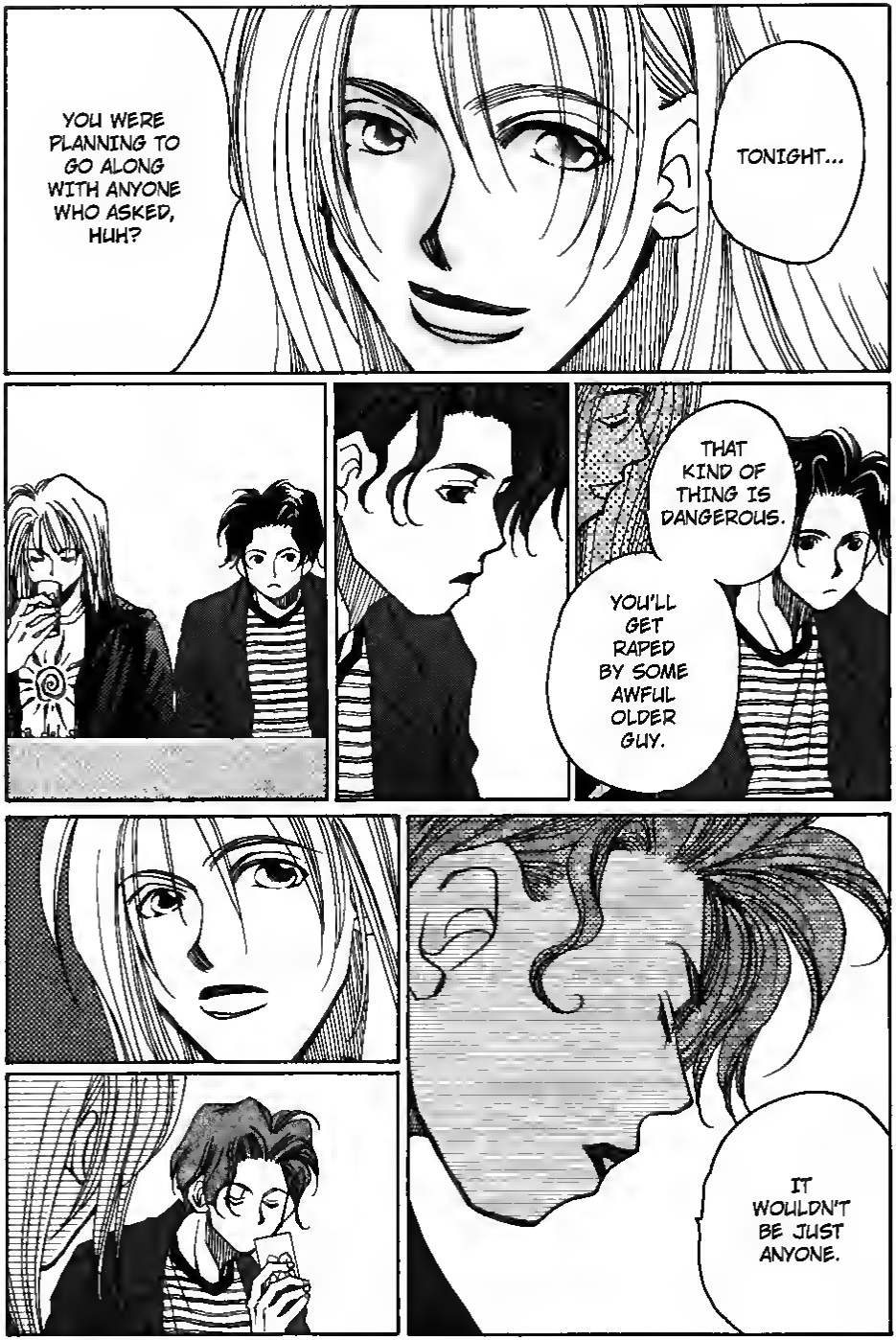
OH, THAT...
I'D RATHER FORGET IT...
THAT WAS A WHILE AGO.
I HEARD YOU RAN OFF SOMEWHERE TOGETHER THE OTHER DAY.
AREN'T YOU GOING OUT WITH KOUTAROU?
WHAT?
I GOT DUMPED.
IT WAS NO GOOD.
THEY SAY THAT KID HAS A TIGHT DEFENSE DESPITE THE FACT THAT HE'S OUT TO HAVE FUN.
HE'S FAMOUS FOR NEVER LETTING ANYONE INTO HIS APARTMENT.
HM...
.....
CHINK
OH, SO THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED?
YES!
DON'T RUB SALT IN MY WOUNDS!

HEY!
HAVE YOU BEEN TO THAT RAMEN SHOP AROUND THE CORNER?
NOPE.
AHHH
THE SHIO RAMEN THERE IS SOOOO GOOD.
IT ONLY COMES WITH GREEN ONION AND PORK,
BUT THAT PORK IS REALLY HIGH QUALITY.
COOKED TENDER AND JUICY....
THEY COULD TOTALLY SELL THAT PORK ON IT'S OWN.
THE SOUP'S WELL-DEVELOPED TOO...
GO
THE KIND THAT'S LIGHT, BUT RICH IN FLAVOR...
IT'S A LITTLE EXPENSIVE, BUT...

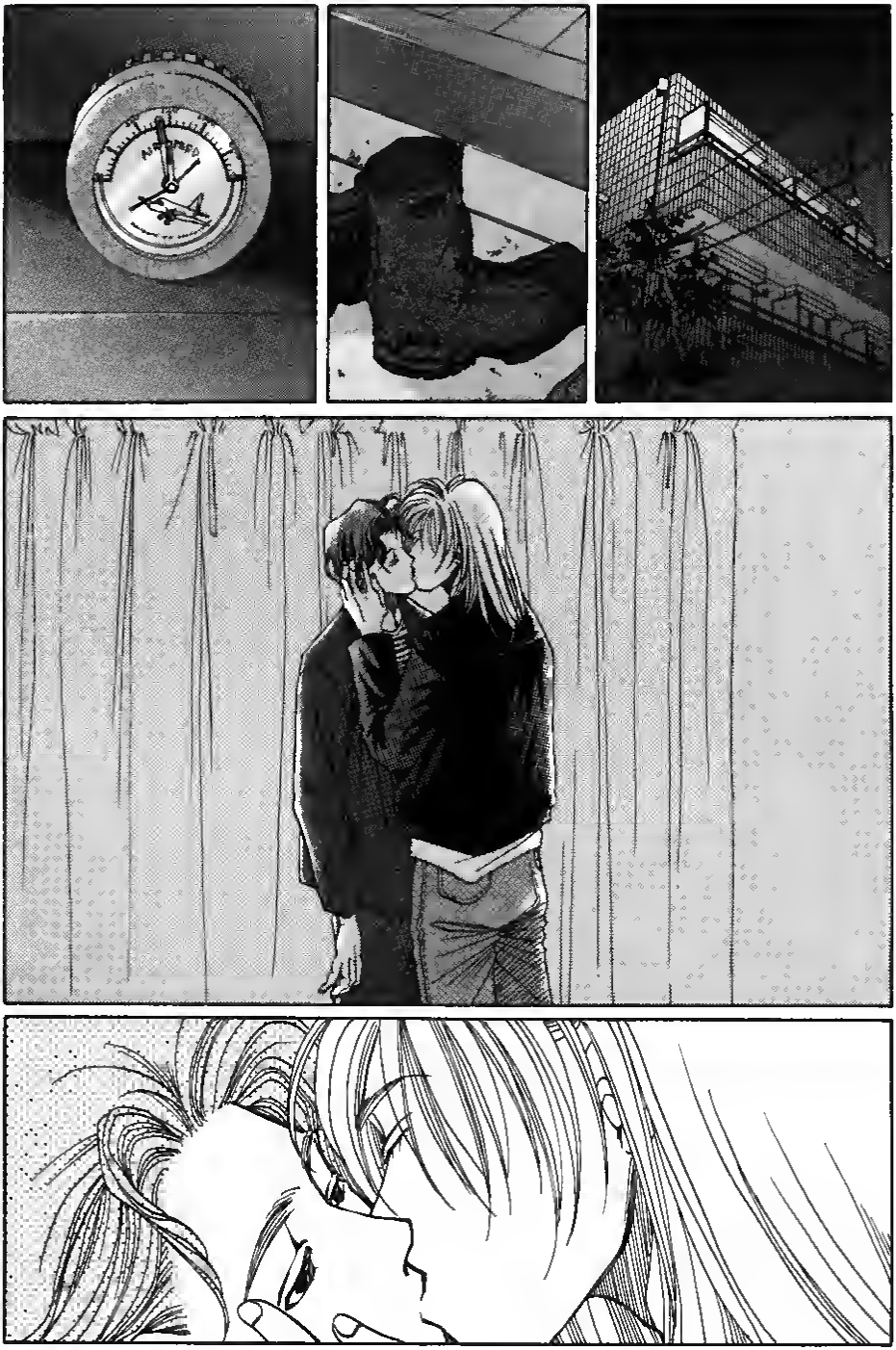

RIGHT?
YOU WANNA HAVE SOME NOW, DON'T YOU?

SLURP
SLURP
HAA
HAA
.....
.....
YOU'RE STARVING, RIGHT?
IT'S OKAY IF YOU WANT SOMETHING ELSE... IT'S MY TREAT.
SLURP
COMING RIGHT UP!
RAMEN WITH EGG PLEASE!

SEEMS LIKE YOU HAVE NOWHERE TO GO AND YOU'RE AT A LOSS OF WHAT TO DO NOW.
YOU JUST SPLIT UP WITH YOUR ROOMMATE.
FROM THE LOOKS OF IT,
WHY ARE YOU CARRYING AROUND THE HUGE BAGS?
...DOES IT LOOK THAT WAY?
YEP, LOOKS THAT WAY.
I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT, MORE OR LESS...


YOU WERE PLANNING TO GO ALONG WITH ANYONE WHO ASKED, HUH?
TONIGHT...
THAT KIND OF THING IS DANGEROUS.
YOU'LL GET RAPED BY SOME AWFUL OLDER GUY.
IT WOULDN'T BE JUST ANYONE.

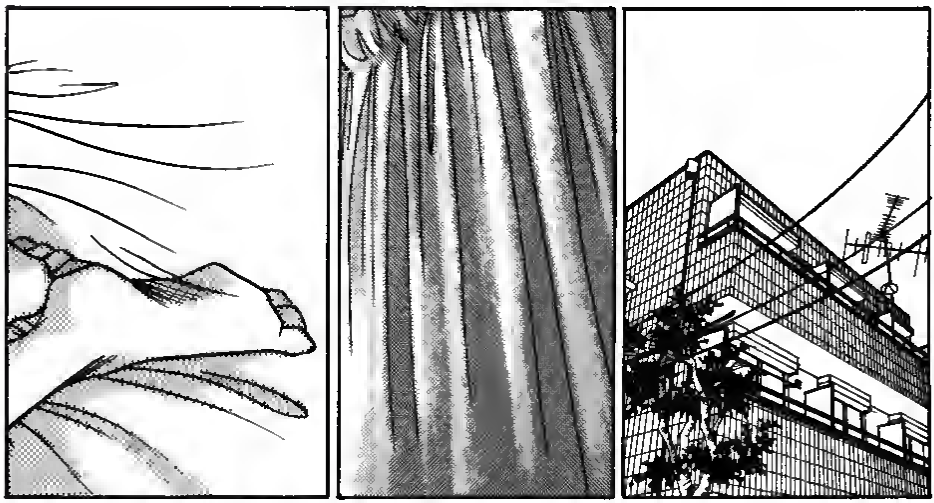
I'M NOT *THAT* DESPERATE.



HOW SHOULD I GIVE IT TO YOU?
HOW DO YOU LIKE IT?
.....
WHATEVER...

WHATEVER, AS LONG AS IT FEELS GOOD.
MAKE ME LOSE MYSELF...

AH...
...
...
HA-
AH...



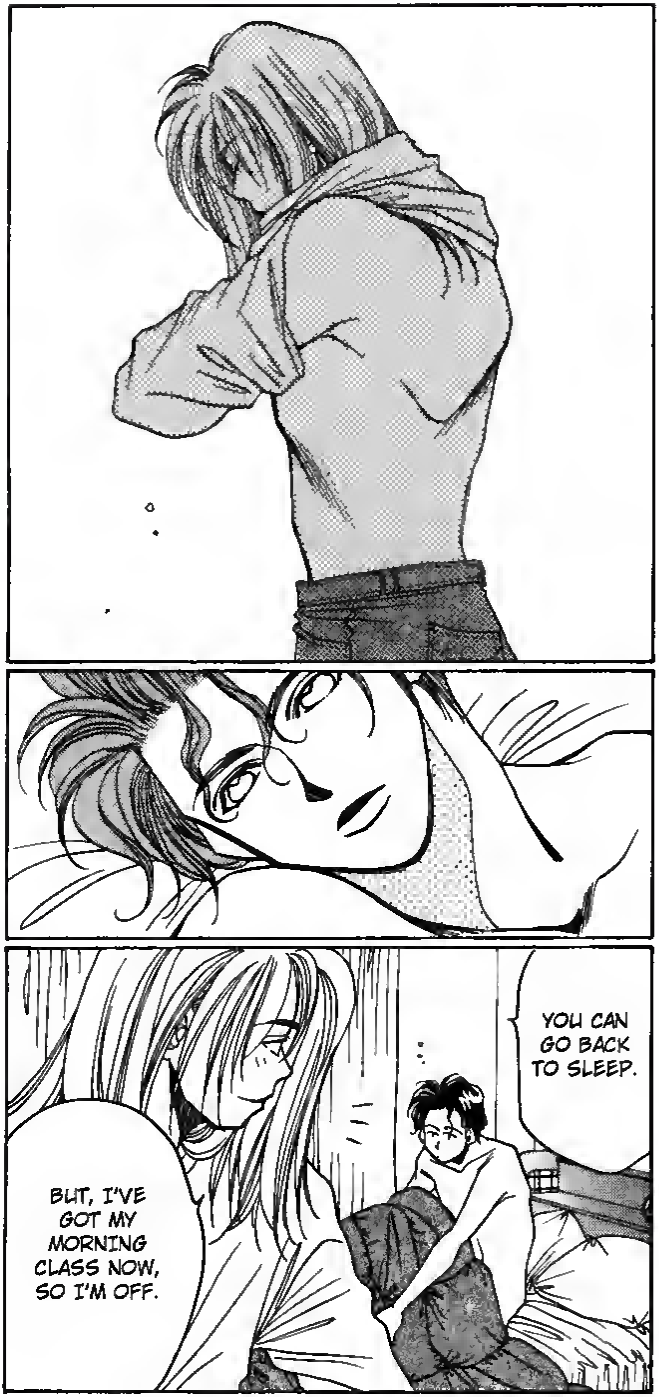
AUTHOR'S NOTES:
● TRIVIAL TALK - PART 3 ●

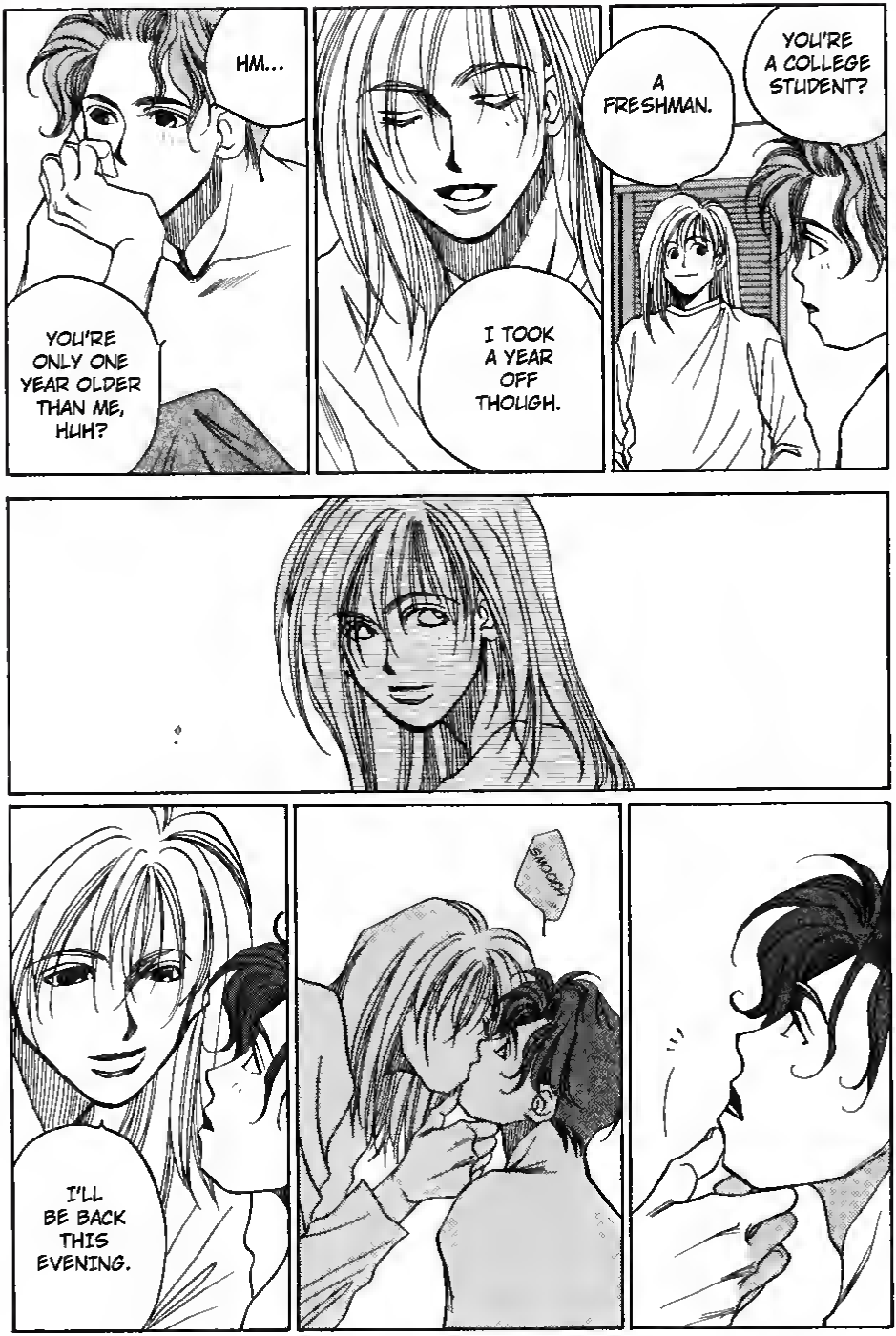
I HAVEN'T HAD A CHANCE TO TOUCH ON IT IN THE STORY, SO IT HASN'T BEEN PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED YET, BUT MAHORIN IS FROM CHIBA PREFECTURE.

ALTHOUGH *DOUSEI AI* IS SET IN TOKYO, NOT A SINGLE CHARACTER (SO FAR) WAS BORN IN TOKYO. THERE WILL BE SOON.

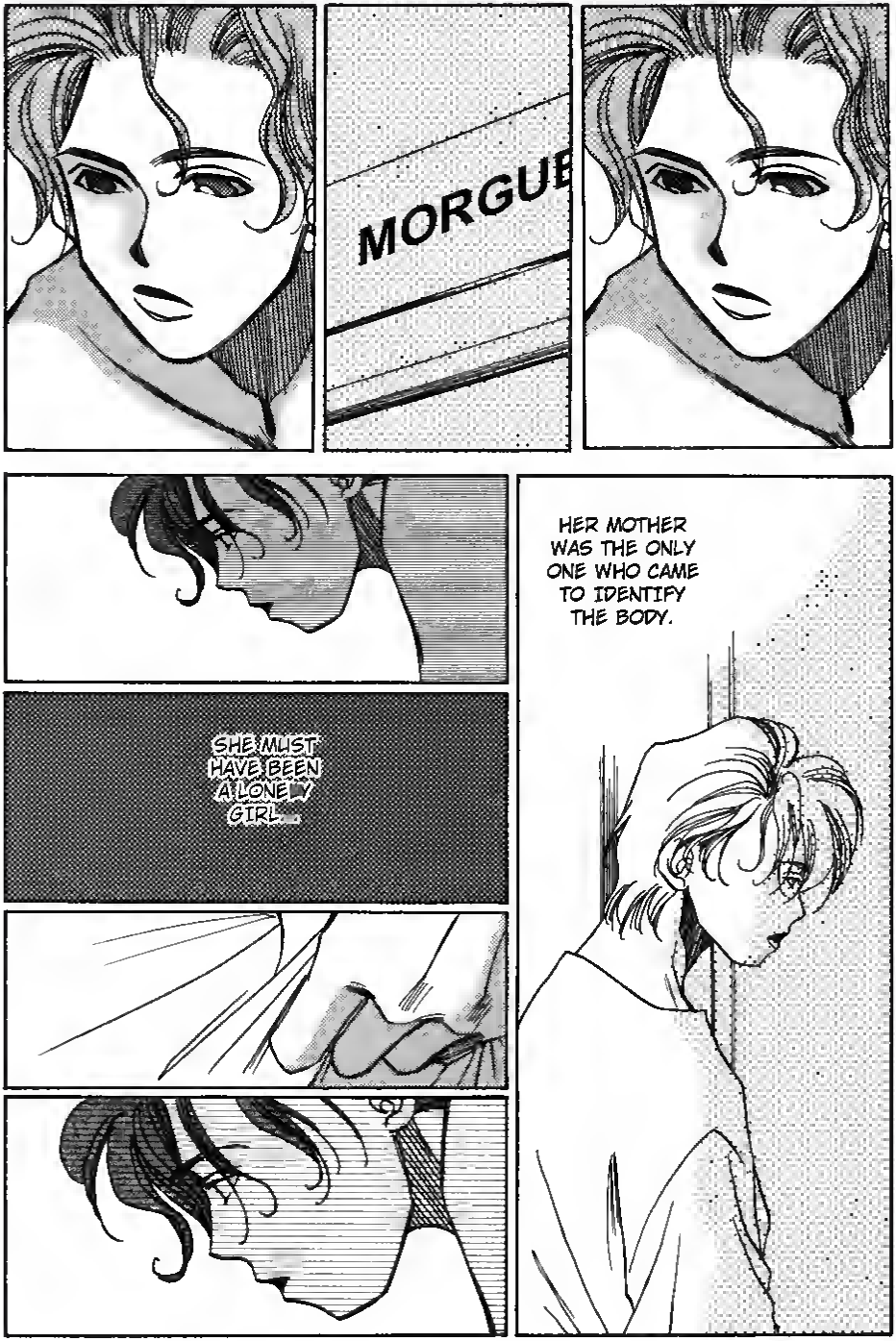
BUT, THAT WAS PRETTY MUCH THE CASE WHEN I WENT TO COLLEGE IN THE CITY AS WELL.

IT'S A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE FROM MANY DIFFERENT AREAS GATHER AND LIVE I REALLY FEEL LIKE THAT'S THE TYPE OF PLACE TOKYO IS.




HM...
YOU'RE ONLY ONE YEAR OLDER THAN ME, HUH?
I TOOK A YEAR OFF THOUGH.
A FRESHMAN.
YOU'RE A COLLEGE STUDENT?
I'LL BE BACK THIS EVENING.
SMOOCH

I'LL BE BACK, OKAY?
GO AHEAD AND EAT ANYTHING IN THE FRIDGE.
CLANK
LOOKS LIKE ONCE AGAIN...
I'VE SOMEHOW MANAGED TO SECURE A PLACE TO SLEEP.


MORGUE
SHE MUST HAVE BEEN A LONELY GIRL...
HER MOTHER WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO CAME TO IDENTIFY THE BODY.

"DON'T YOU GO...
RUNNING AWAY."

IT'S ALREADY...
BEEN A WHOLE DAY...

AH...
IT'S GOD...
GOD
HAS
COME.

I'M SO SORRY, GOD.
I'M SO SORRY, GOD...
I'M SO SORRY, GOD...
CLATTER
CLATTER
SHINJUKU-
SHINJUKU-
GOD-

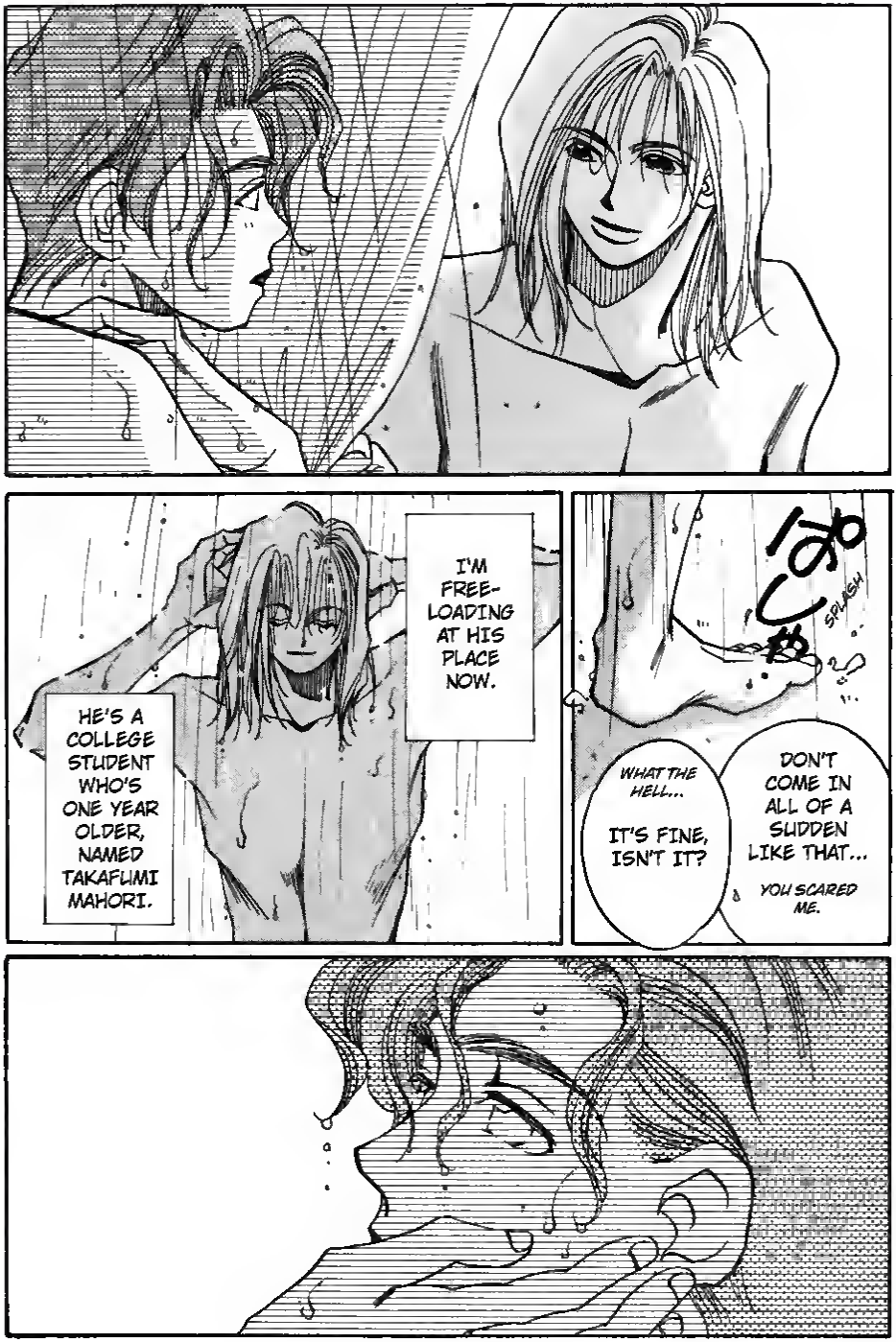
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
HUH?
山手線
Takadanobaba

DOUSEI AI
LOVE UNDER ONE ROOF

同棲愛
どうせいあい

CHAPTER 12: THE DOG AT MAHORI'S PLACE - PART 1

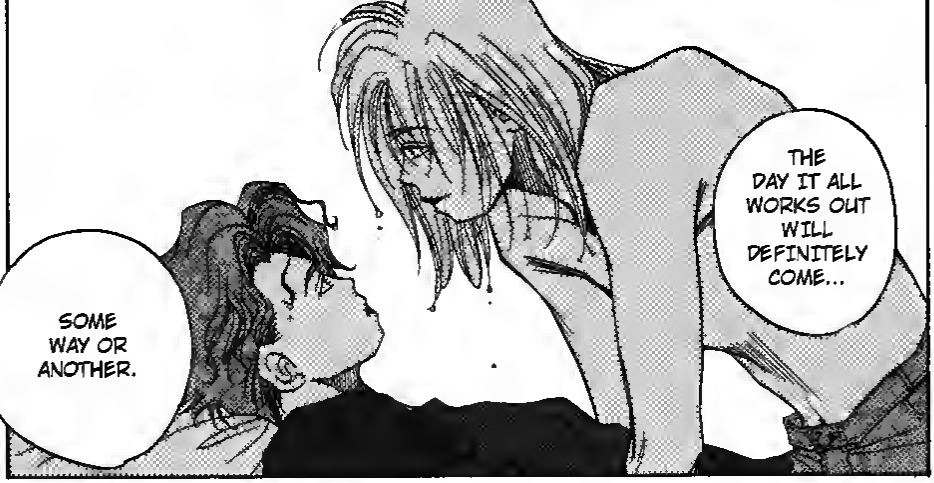
SSSSHHHH
MY NAME IS TSUBAKI SUGIURA.
I'M 18 AND CURRENTLY JOBLESS.
SSSHWP
SINCE I RAN AWAY FROM HOME IN MARCH, I'VE BEEN DRIFTING AROUND.
GATCHA

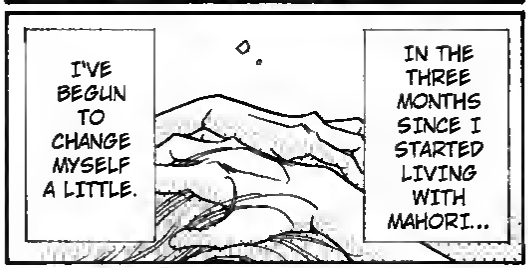

I'M FREE-LOADING AT HIS PLACE NOW.
HE'S A COLLEGE STUDENT WHO'S ONE YEAR OLDER, NAMED TAKAFUMI MAHORI.
SPLASH
WHAT THE HELL...
IT'S FINE, ISN'T IT?
DON'T COME IN ALL OF A SUDDEN LIKE THAT...
YOU SCARED ME.

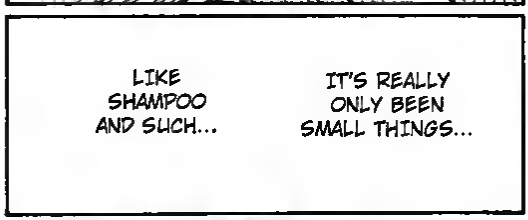
COHABIT-
ING...
WITH
A GUY.
SINCE
WE CLEARLY
HAVE A SEXUAL
RELATIONSHIP,
WE'RE, WHAT
YOU'D SAY,
"COHABITING".

BUT YOU'VE CALLED THEM AT LEAST, RIGHT?
...JUST ONCE.
BUT I HUNG UP BECAUSE MY MOM ANSWERED.
IF IT WAS MY DAD, I FEEL LIKE I MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SAY SOMETHING, BUT...
MY MOM...
SHE DOESN'T WANT TO TALK TO ME EITHER, I GUESS.
THAT'S OKAY.
THERE'S NO NEED TO RUSH. YOUR PARENTS WILL ALWAYS BE YOUR PARENTS.

IF MY PARENTS KNEW, THEY'D PROBABLY CRY AGAIN...

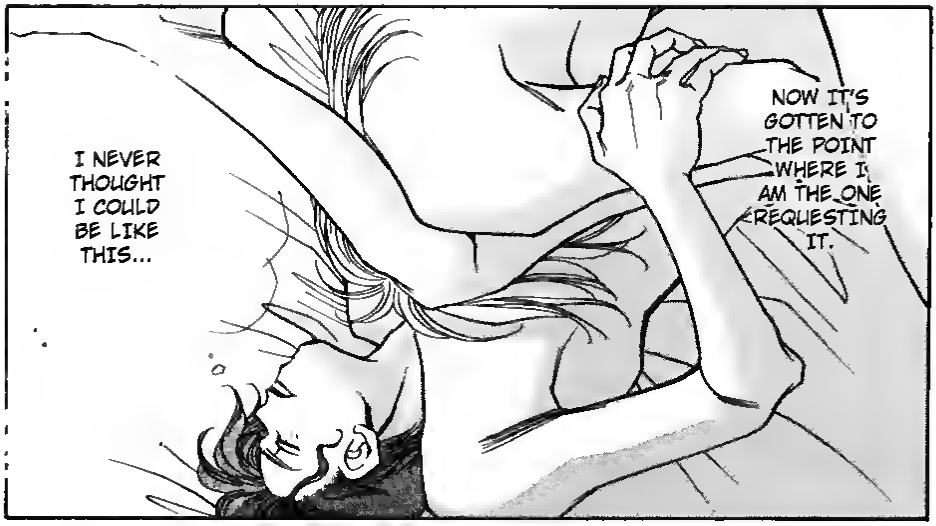

SOME WAY OR ANOTHER.
THE DAY IT ALL WORKS OUT WILL DEFINITELY COME...


I'VE BEGUN TO CHANGE MYSELF A LITTLE.
IN THE THREE MONTHS SINCE I STARTED LIVING WITH MAHORI...


LIKE SHAMPOO AND SUCH...
IT'S REALLY ONLY BEEN SMALL THINGS...

I'VE BEEN BORROWING THE ONE THAT MAHORI USES, BUT IT'S ACTUALLY MADE FOR WOMEN. (HE EVEN USES HAIR MASKS!)

I GET THE FEELING THAT THE PILE OF THOSE LITTLE THINGS IS CHANGING ME.
ADDITIONALLY, MY TOOTHPASTE, THE KIND OF TV I WATCH...
IT'S JUST BEEN TRIVIAL STUFF LIKE THAT, BUT...
ALSO, RECENTLY, MY MAIN MEAL HAS BECOME PASTA...
BECAUSE MAHORI IS REALLY INTO SPAGHETTI.
BEFORE, I USED TO FEEL, IF ANYTHING, ANNOYED, BUT...
ABOVE ALL, I'VE STARTED TO LIKE SEX.



SOMEDAY, LIKE PEELING AWAY A THIN FILM...

WILL THE TIME COME WHEN I CAN SEE MYSELF CLEARLY?

RIGHT NOW, I WANT TO WAIT FOR THAT MOMENT.

...JUST A LITTLE LONGER...

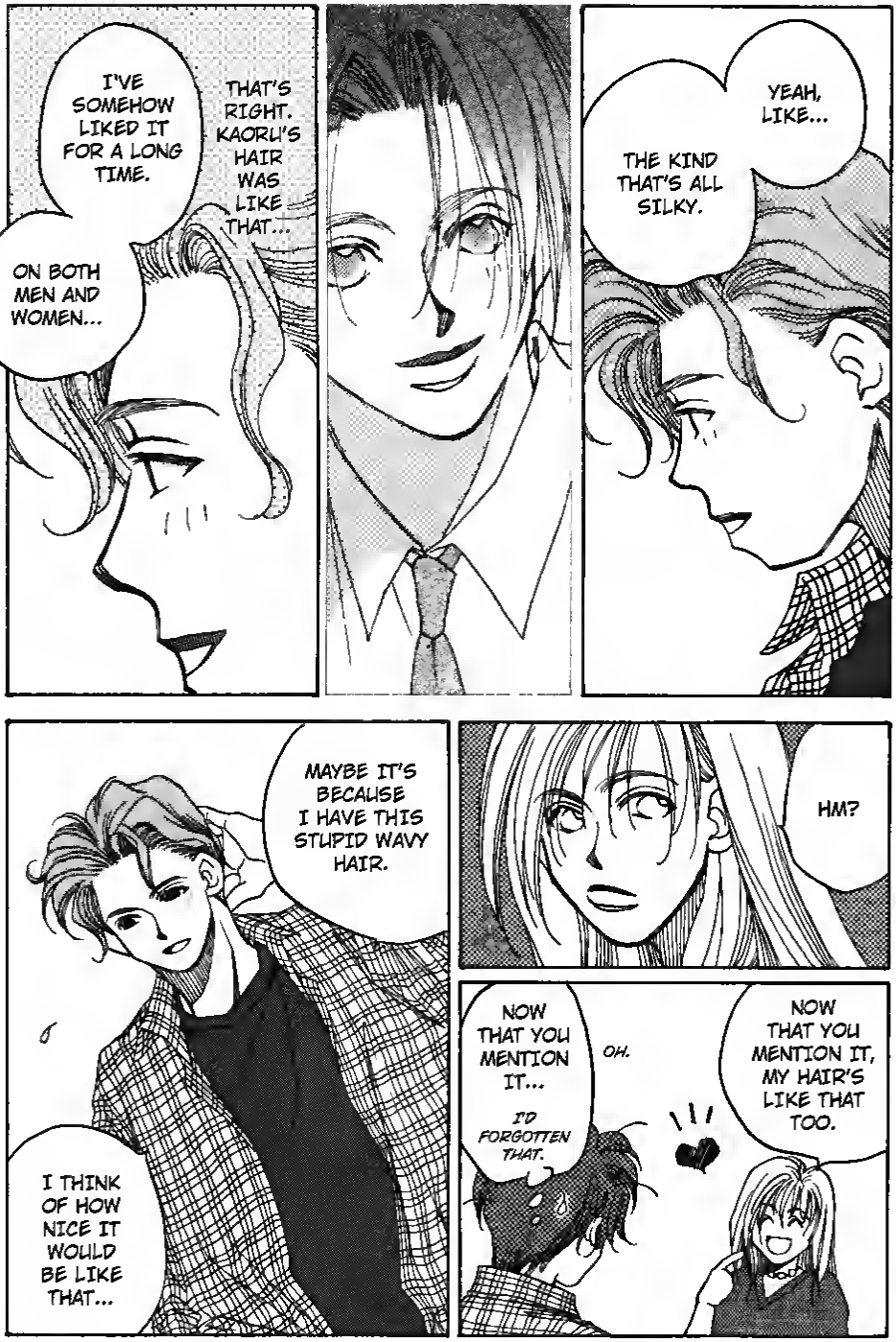
LIKE THIS...

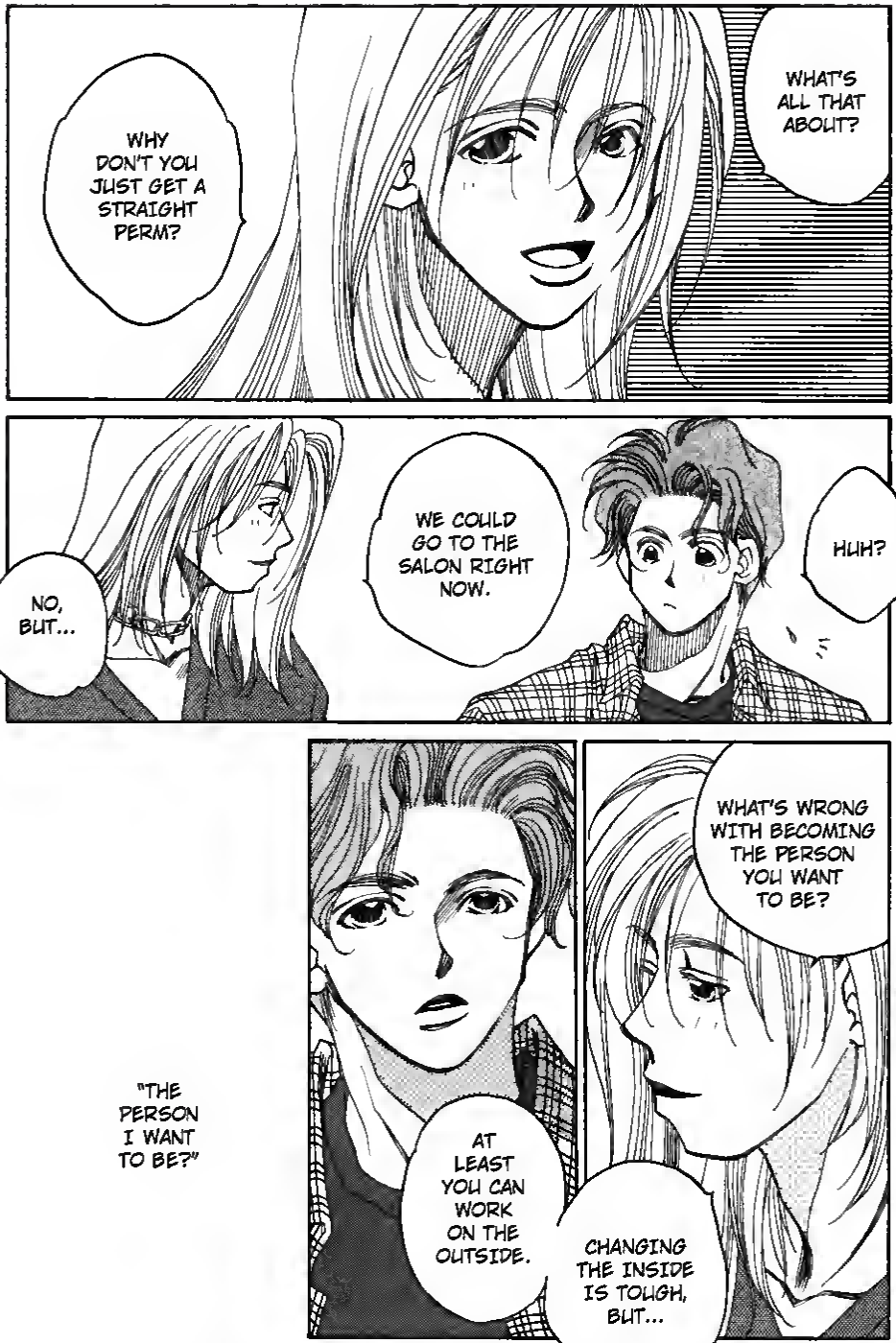
WHO'S JACKIE?
MY PET DOG AT MY PARENT'S HOUSE IS NAMED JACKIE.
BYE BYE!
WHAT? LEAVING ALREADY?
YEAH, GOOD BOY. GOOD BOY.
SQUEEZE
ampm
I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM RECENTLY, SO I WONDER HOW HE'S DOING...
HE'S SO UNBELIEVABLY CUTE.
A COLLIE.
OH, WHAT TYPE OF DOG?
IT'S OKAY, ACTUALLY.
BECAUSE I HAVE YOU HERE.
HM, THAT'S RIGHT. HE MUST BE LONELY.
YOU CAN'T KEEP A PET AT THE APARTMENT, HUH?

HEY...
MAHORIN!
DEEP IN MY GUT, I GOT A LITTLE OFFENDED.
JUST NOW... THAT WAS KINDA...
EXCUSE ME?
ARE YOU ON YOUR WAY HOME FROM SCHOOL, HARU?
YEP.
UH, KIND OF.
SHE'S HOT ♡
A CERTAIN SOMEONE?
OH, YEAH. THAT'S RIGHT.
OH, COULD THIS BE...
IT IS YOU!
OUT SHOPPING?

HOW ABOUT THAT? YOU REALLY ARE CUTE.
UH, HI. I'M SUGIURA.
I'M HARU KITAJIMA. NICE TO MEET YOU!
OH, SHE'S A FRIEND FROM COLLEGE.
"A CERTAIN SOMEONE"?
HOW NICE...
I TOLD YOU.
?
SEE YOU AT SCHOOL TOMORROW, OKAY?
YEP.
I'VE TOLD HER THAT I'M LIVING TOGETHER WITH MY LOVER.
BUT, SHE'S THE ONLY ONE I'VE TOLD.
WELL, HARU IS REALLY A CLOSE FRIEND, SO...
YOU'RE TELLING PEOPLE ABOUT ME?
HUH? OH.

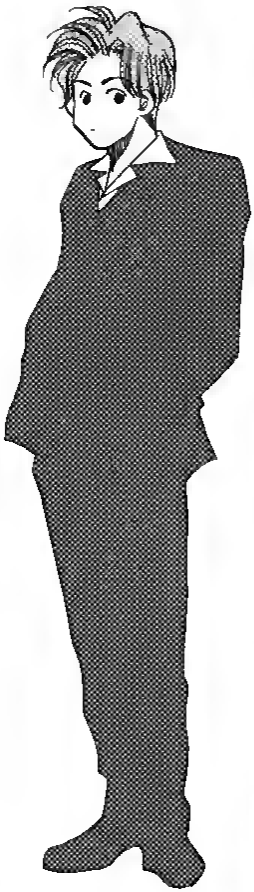
WHEN I THINK THAT SUCH A PRETTY WOMAN THOUGHT, "OH, HE'S GAY," THE MOMENT SHE SAW ME, IT'S A LITTLE...
WELL, IT'S COMPLICATED.
UH, NO... IT'S JUST...
WAS THAT BAD?
I'M A LOVER?
"LOVER"...
ANNOYED
HEY, THERE!
ARE YOU LUSTING AFTER A WOMAN RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME?
LOVE STRAIGHT HAIR LIKE THAT, I GUESS.
I JUST...
HAIR?
OH, CRAP. THAT'S RIGHT. I'M MAHORI'S LOVER.
HUH? NO...
I DIDN'T MEAN IT THAT WAY.


I'VE SOMEHOW LIKED IT FOR A LONG TIME.
THAT'S RIGHT. KAORU'S HAIR WAS LIKE THAT...
ON BOTH MEN AND WOMEN...
YEAH, LIKE...
THE KIND THAT'S ALL SILKY.
MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE I HAVE THIS STUPID WAVY HAIR.
I THINK OF HOW NICE IT WOULD BE LIKE THAT...
HM?
NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT...
I'D FORGOTTEN THAT.
OH.
NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, MY HAIR'S LIKE THAT TOO.

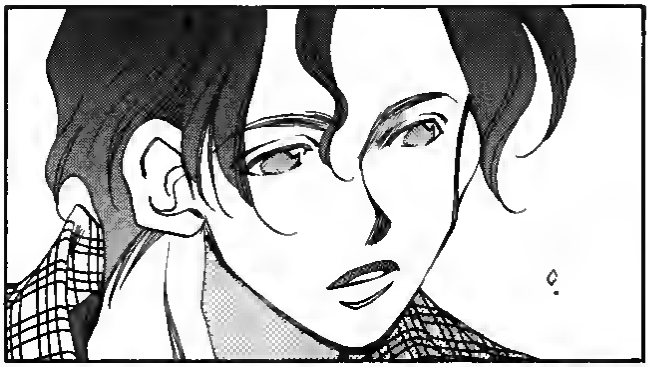

WHAT'S ALL THAT ABOUT?
WHY DON'T YOU JUST GET A STRAIGHT PERM?
HUH?
WE COULD GO TO THE SALON RIGHT NOW.
NO, BUT...
WHAT'S WRONG WITH BECOMING THE PERSON YOU WANT TO BE?
CHANGING THE INSIDE IS TOUGH, BUT...
AT LEAST YOU CAN WORK ON THE OUTSIDE.
"THE PERSON I WANT TO BE?"

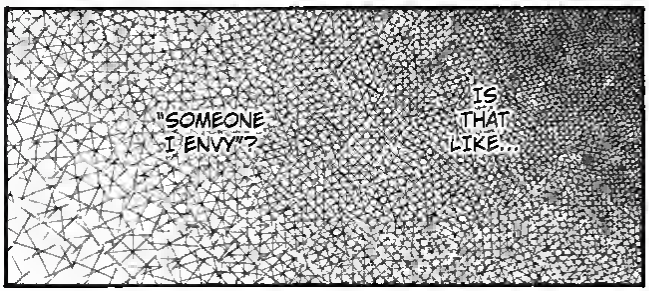
AUTHOR'S NOTES:

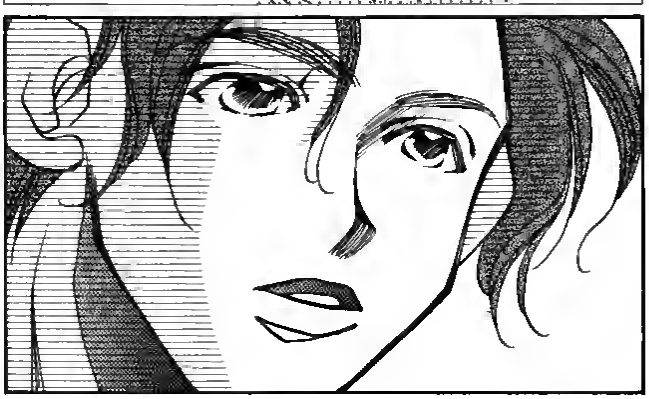
TSUBA-KING...



BASICALLY, HE WEARS MOSTLY BLACK CLOTHING. RECENTLY, I'VE BEEN REFERRING TO A.P.C.'S CLOTHING, BUT THAT'S BECAUSE HIS TASTE IN CLOTHING CHANGES ACCORDING TO WHOM HE'S DATING...







YEAH, I'M FINE.
I TOLD YOU I'M EATING WELL.
IT'S ALRIGHT. I'M MAKING FOOD FOR MYSELF...
REALLY? WELL, THAT'S GOOD...
HEY, COME HOME ONCE IN A WHILE, OKAY?
KULIYA REALLY WANTS TO PLAY WITH YOU TOO.

I'M SO PERSISTENT TOO...

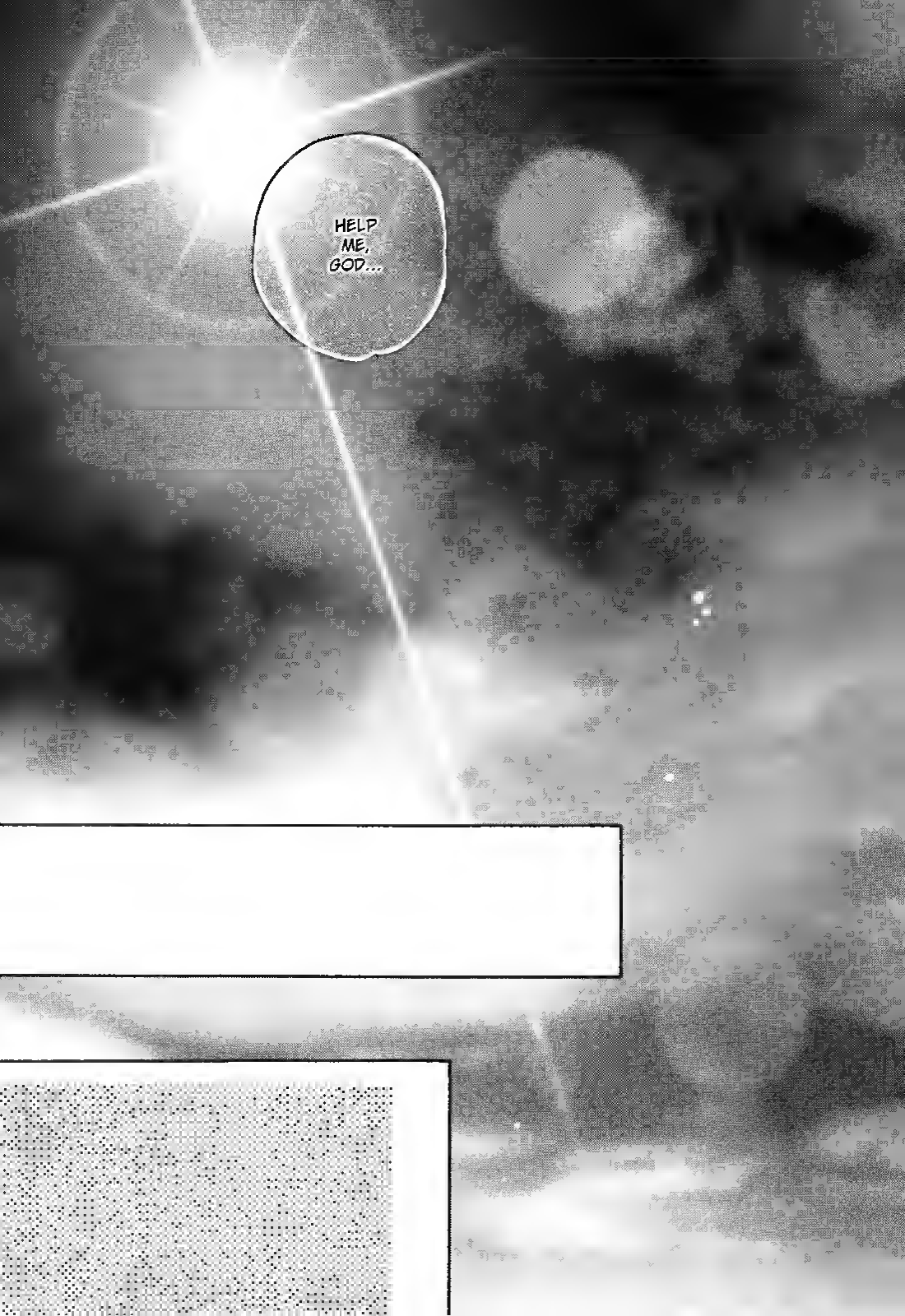
WHY DID I REMEMBER HIM AGAIN JUST NOW...

KOU, YOU KNOW WHAT?
TODAY, KANA FROM THE LILY CLASS...
HELLO, KOU!
...WELL, IT'S ALMOST SUMMER BREAK...
CONFESSED HER LOVE TO ME!
OH, NO! A LOVE ENTANGLEMENT!?
HEY, HEY!
TATSUYA GOT MAD.
WHEN KANA CAME OVER TO PLAY WITH ME IN THE ROSE CLASS...
BUT, BUT!
R- REALLY... THAT'S GREAT...

HMMM...
.....
.....
HM...
REALLY? THAT'S TOUGH.
SO, WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
I LIKE TATSUYA BETTER!
I SEE, I SEE...
I'M BAD WITH WOMEN TOO... YEP...
WOOO! CHOOSING YOUR BUDDY, KUUYA! HOW ADMIRABLE!!
SO, THEN... I WON'T PLAY WITH KANA!
WHAAAT?! WHAT ABOUT THE GIRL?
.....

HEY!!
HEY, YOU! CORRECT THAT, SILLY BRAT!
HELLO, KOUTAROU?
KOU SAYS GUYS ARE BETTER TOO!
I DIDN'T SAY THAT!!
TURN
YOU KNOW, KUUYA HAS GOTTEN REALLY CLEVER LATELY.
YEAH, ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT.
SOONER OR LATER, OKAY?
HUFF HUFF HUFF
NOT LISTENING AT ALL
KUUYA'S SO POPULAR!
POPULAR!
WELL, ANY-WAY...
COME HOME ONCE IN A WHILE, OKAY?
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.
TALK TO YOU LATER.
HE'S JUST LIKE YOU WHEN YOU WERE LITTLE.

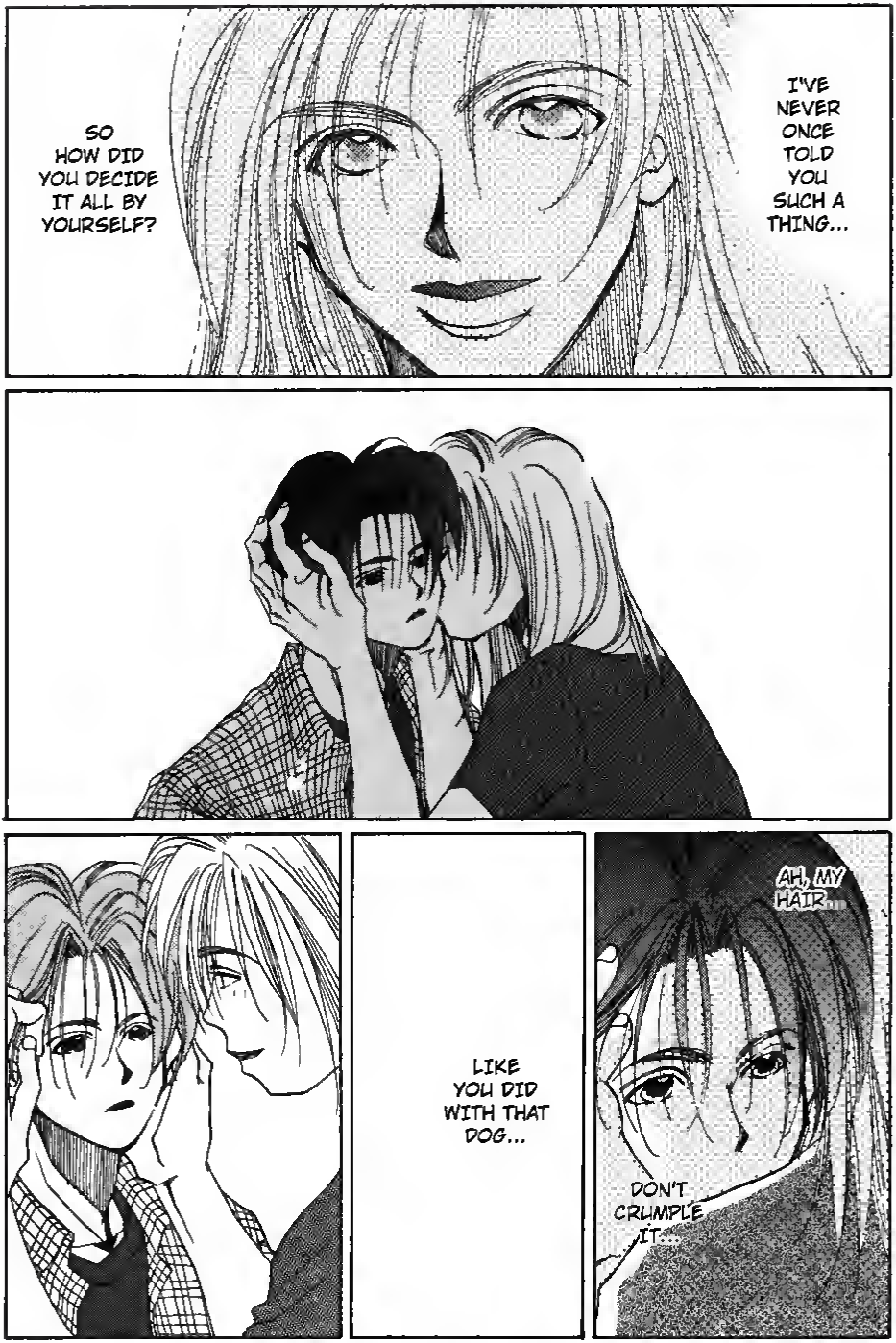
CLICK
ガチャ
CLATTER
...I'M SO TIRED...
.....

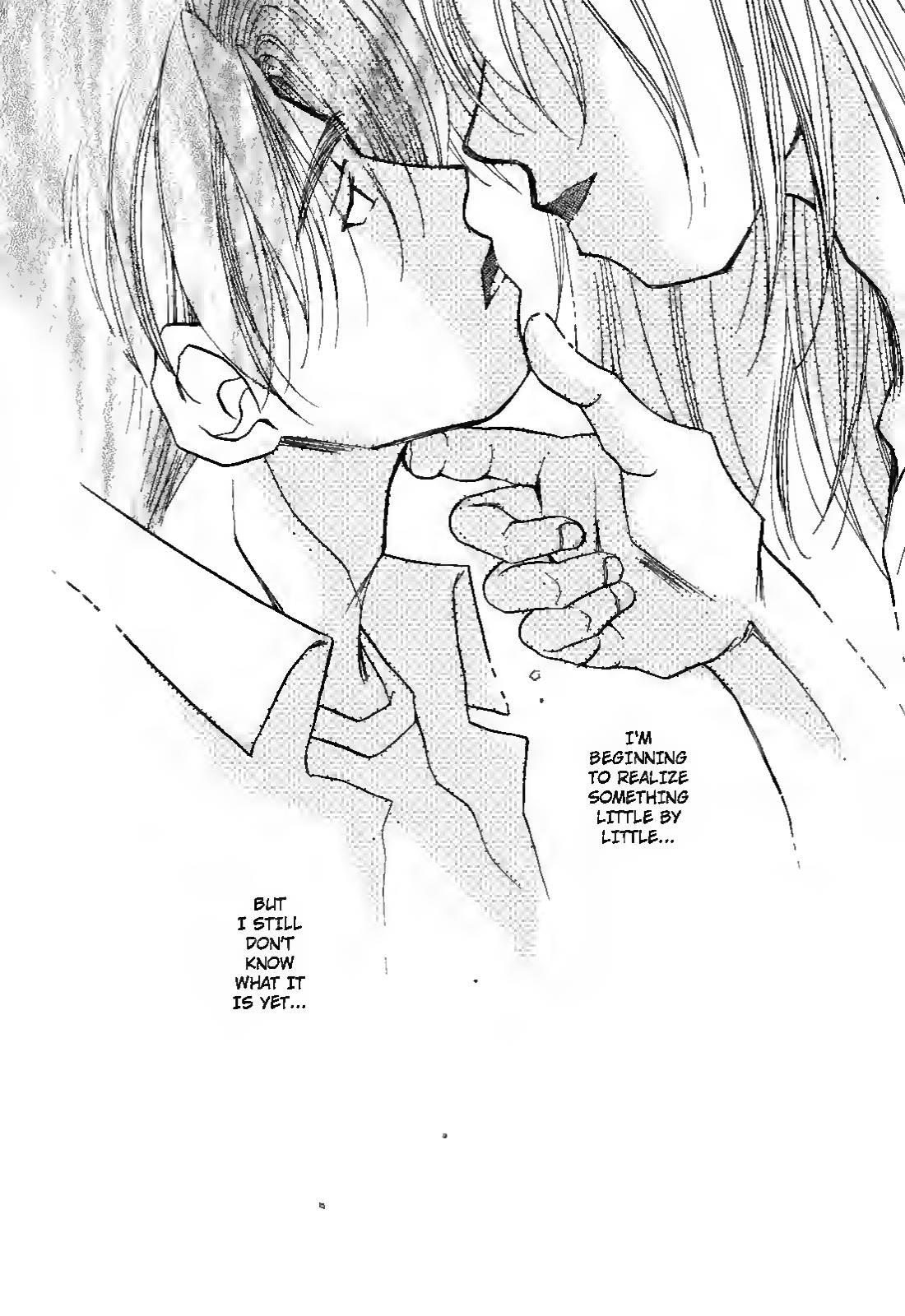

HELP ME, GOD...

HM...
YEAH...
YEAH.
YOU HAVEN'T MOVED FROM IN FRONT OF THAT MIRROR SINCE WE GOT BACK.
YOU KNOW...
YES!
IT'S REALLY VERY IMPRESSIVE.

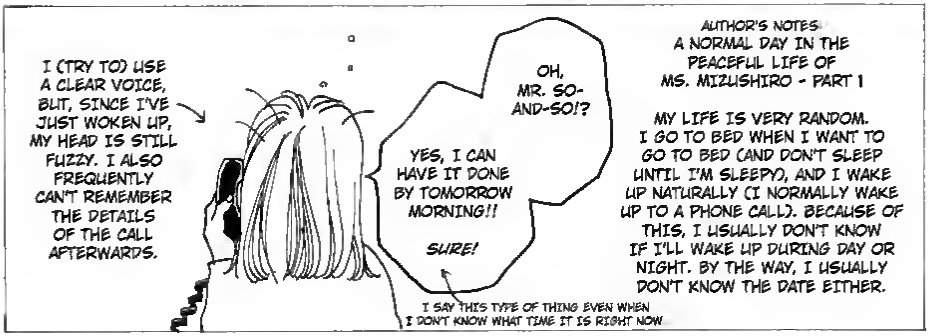
I'M SOOO HAPPY!
IT'S NICE AND SMOOTH!
IT'S A MIRACLE!
LOOK!
BUT, IT'S SOOOO SILKY!
I FEEL LIKE I HAVE SAID GOODBYE TO MY 18-YEAR-OLD SELF.
SOMEHOW, I REALLY LOVE THIS ME...
I LOVE YOU TOO.

I'M HIS LOVER.
THAT'S RIGHT.
REALLY?
DO I...
REALLY LOVE THIS PERSON?
THAT MEANS ...
HE'S MY LOVER, RIGHT?


SO HOW DID YOU DECIDE IT ALL BY YOURSELF?
I'VE NEVER ONCE TOLD YOU SUCH A THING...
LIKE YOU DID WITH THAT DOG...
AH, MY HAIR...
DON'T CRUMPLE IT...


I'M BEGINNING TO REALIZE SOMETHING LITTLE BY LITTLE...
BUT I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS YET...

CHAPTER 13: THE DOG AT MAHORI'S PLACE - PART 2


I (TRY TO) USE A CLEAR VOICE, BUT, SINCE I'VE JUST WOKEN UP, MY HEAD IS STILL FUZZY. I ALSO FREQUENTLY CAN'T REMEMBER THE DETAILS OF THE CALL AFTERWARDS.
OH, MR. SO-AND-SO!?
YES, I CAN HAVE IT DONE BY TOMORROW MORNING!!
SURE!
I SAY THIS TYPE OF THING EVEN WHEN I DON'T KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS RIGHT NOW

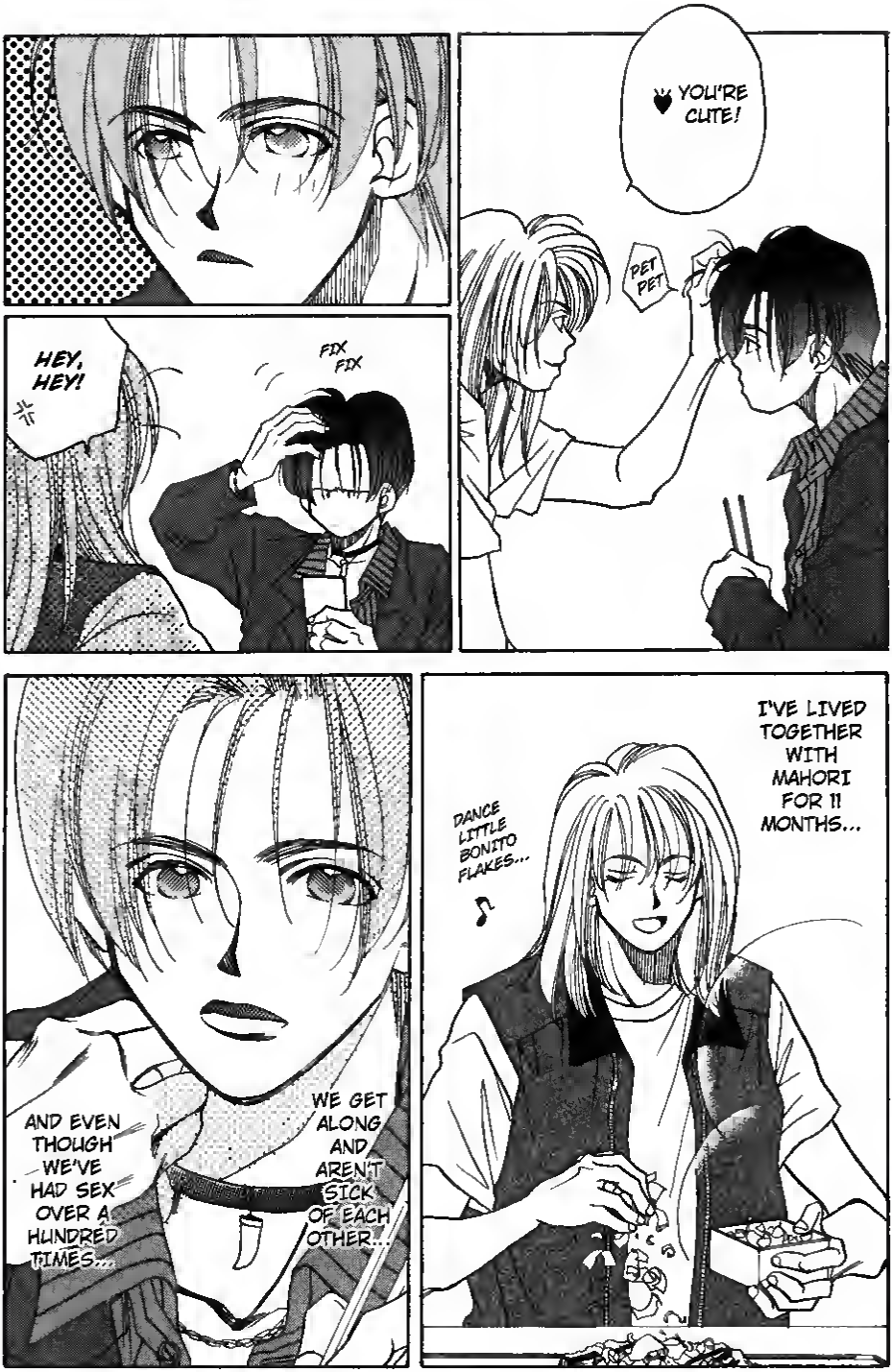
AUTHOR'S NOTES:
A NORMAL DAY IN THE PEACEFUL LIFE OF MS. MIZUSHIRO - PART 1

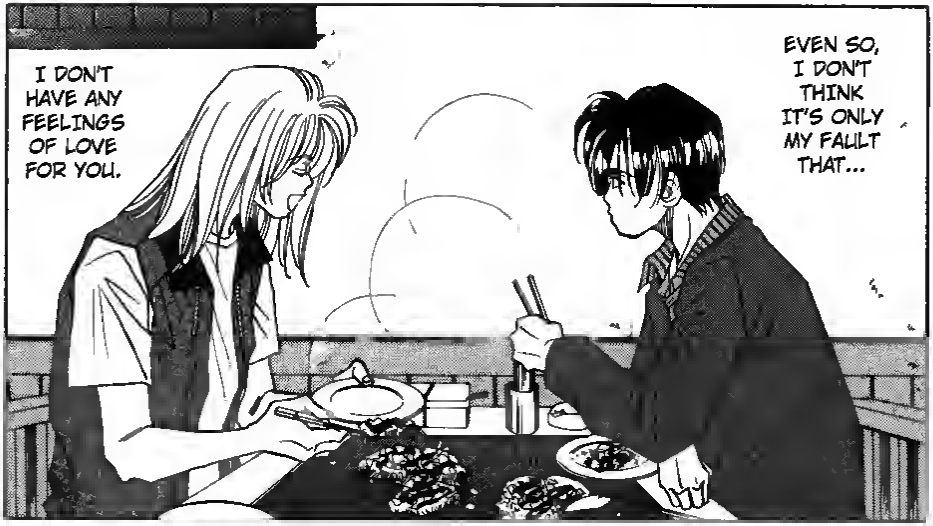
MY LIFE IS VERY RANDOM. I GO TO BED WHEN I WANT TO GO TO BED (AND DON'T SLEEP UNTIL I'M SLEEPY), AND I WAKE UP NATURALLY (I NORMALLY WAKE UP TO A PHONE CALL). BECAUSE OF THIS, I USUALLY DON'T KNOW IF I'LL WAKE UP DURING DAY OR NIGHT. BY THE WAY, I USUALLY DON'T KNOW THE DATE EITHER.

I'M 19, A SAGITTARIUS, BLOOD TYPE O, FROM GUNMA PREFECTURE,
AND CURRENTLY, A PART-TIMER.
KA-CHINK
MY APPEARANCE SEEMS A LITTLE DIFFERENT?
I'M LEAVING NOW.
I GUESS THAT'S TRUE.
IT'S ALREADY BEEN A WHOLE YEAR SINCE I RAN AWAY FROM HOME.
OH, TSUBAKI. LET'S EAT OUT TONIGHT.
YEAH, OKAY.
SO, 6:30 AT THE USUAL PLACE?
'KAY.
WHILE I WAS BEING IDLE, TIME WAS THE ONLY THING THAT WAS CLEARLY MOVING FORWARD.

OKONOMIYAKI RESTAURANT
BUT, HOW ABOUT...
GETTING A JOB THAT PAYS A BIT BETTER?
I LIKE IT BECAUSE I HAVE FREE TIME.
OH, REALLY...
DON'T YOU HAVE A LOT OF FREE TIME?
WORKING THE FRONT DESK AT THE DRY CLEANING PLACE...
SIZZLE
THINGS HAVE CONTINUED TO DRAG ON WITH MAHORI...
MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE WE HAVE THE SAME BLOOD TYPE THAT WE GET ALONG REMARKABLY WELL.
IN FALL
I'LL BE 20...

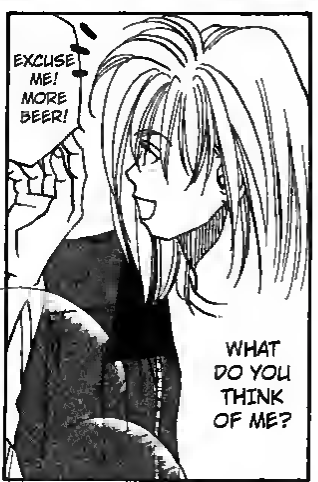
I WONDER WHAT YOU THINK OF ME...
HM... WELL,
WHAT'S THIS? ALL OF A SUDDEN.
HUH?
HEY, MAHORI,
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF ME?
I LOVE YOU.
I'M ASKING ABOUT ME... AS A PERSON.
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT.
HEY!


YOU'RE CUTE!
PET PET
HEY, HEY!
FIX FIX
I'VE LIVED TOGETHER WITH MAHORI FOR 11 MONTHS...
DANCE LITTLE BONITO FLAKES...
WE GET ALONG AND AREN'T SICK OF EACH OTHER...
AND EVEN THOUGH WE'VE HAD SEX OVER A HUNDRED TIMES...


I DON'T HAVE ANY FEELINGS OF LOVE FOR YOU.
EVEN SO, I DON'T THINK IT'S ONLY MY FAULT THAT...

WELL, WHAT DO YOU THINK?

WHAT AM I TO YOU?


EXCUSE ME! MORE BEER!
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF ME?

THAT'S THE DISCIPLINE OF THE MAHORI FAMILY.
IF YOU BITE ME, I'LL BITE BACK!
BITE
MHAAM
YOU-
NIP
HA HA HA!
THAT HURTS!
OUCH!

...HOW'S JACKIE?
MMM
HE'S FINE...
HE SAID "WOOF" OVER THE PHONE TO ME THE OTHER DAY.
MAHORI...
I THINK I MIGHT BE LONELY...

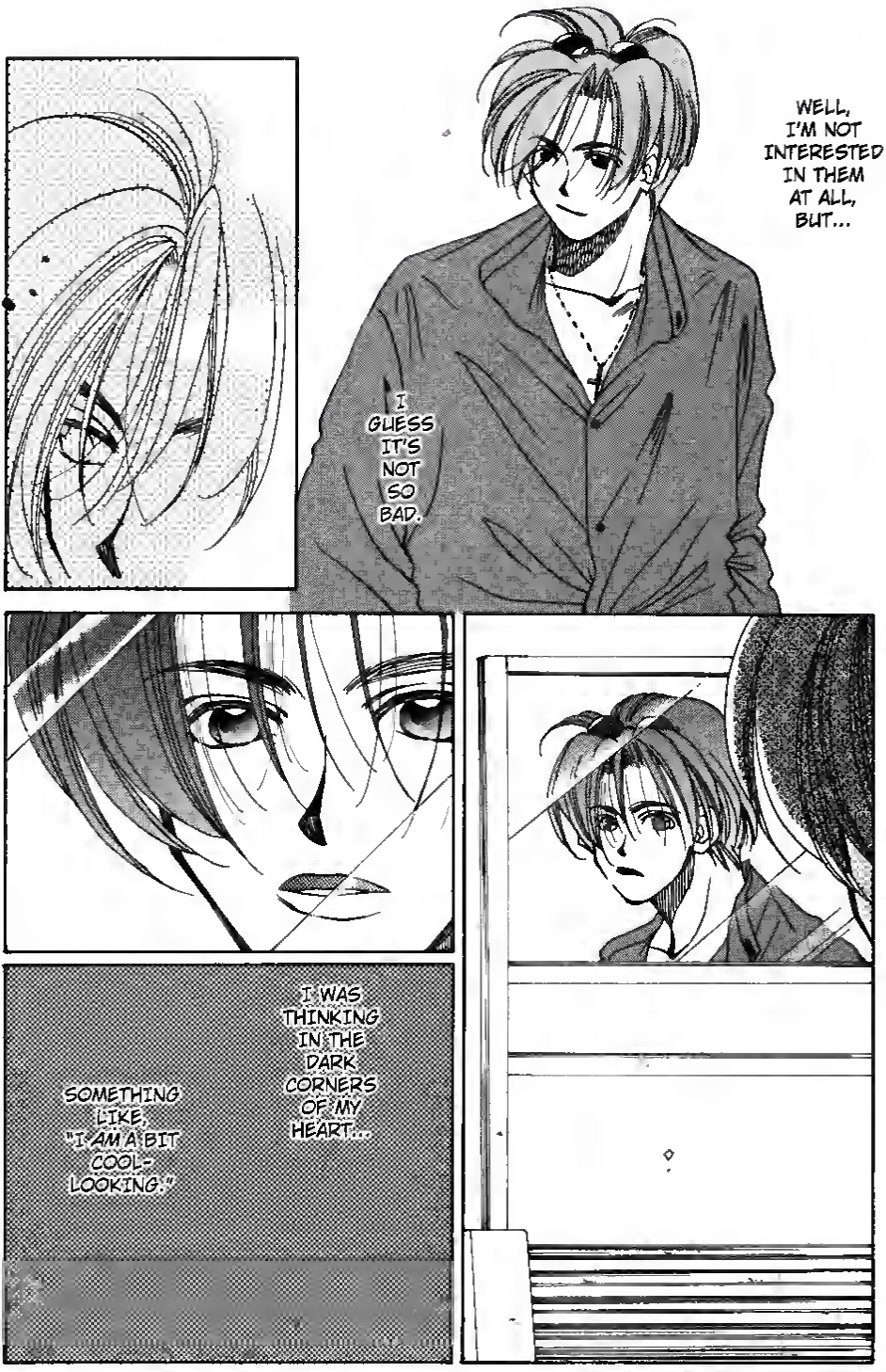
I'LL GIVE YOU WHATEVER YOU NEED.
WHAT'S MISSING?
LIKE YOU'RE GIVING FOOD TO A DOG...
DON'T TALK LIKE THAT...
EACH TIME YOU LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT...
I FEEL LIKE THE EMPTY HOLE IN MY HEART FILLS
...FORGET IT.
LET'S DO IT.
IT'S JUST...
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT'S MISSING...

I'M FED UP WITH BEGGING FOR THINGS FROM YOU.

HURRY
すた
HURRY
すた
OH, HE'S LEAVING.
EXCUSE ME! UM...
PLEASE ACCEPT THIS!!
UM, UM...
WE JUST CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT YOU,
THE COOL GUY THAT WE SEE EVERY TIME WE PASS BY HERE...
WHAT?

SO THAT'S WHY...
PLEASE ACCEPT THIS!!
YOU'RE QUITE FAMOUS AT OUR GIRL'S SCHOOL.
HE'S SO GORGEOUS THIS CLOSE UP!
AH!
UM...
WELL, THEN...
THANKS...
LOOKS LIKE THIS WILL ALL BE OVER IF I JUST TAKE THE PAPER BAG....
.....
SNAP!
ACK!
OKAY! ONE PLUS ONE IS?
TWO!
WHILE WE'RE AT IT, LET'S DO PHOTOS!
WE DID IT!
YAY!

"GOOD WORK" ON WHAT!?
KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!
ESCAPE!
LOOKS LIKE HOME-MADE POUND CAKE...
...UH HUH...
.....
WHO WERE THOSE GIRLS?
WHOA, THAT WAS SHOCKING.
THAT WAS KINDA SCARY.
I DON'T EVEN LIKE SWEET THINGS.
GA-SHOMP
TRASH
.....


WELL, I'M NOT INTERESTED IN THEM AT ALL, BUT...
I GUESS IT'S NOT SO BAD.
I WAS THINKING IN THE DARK CORNERS OF MY HEART...
SOMETHING LIKE, "I AM A BIT COOL-LOOKING."

I LIKE...
BUT I LIKE MYSELF.
THE SKY'S THE LIMIT IF YOU START COMPARING YOURSELF TO OTHERS.
THERE ARE SO MANY GUYS WHO ARE COOLER THAN ME...

CLACK-A
CLACK-A
CLACK-A
CLACK-A
CLAAANG

I LIKE MYSELF.
...SINCE WHEN?

WHEN THE HELL...
DID THAT HAPPEN...

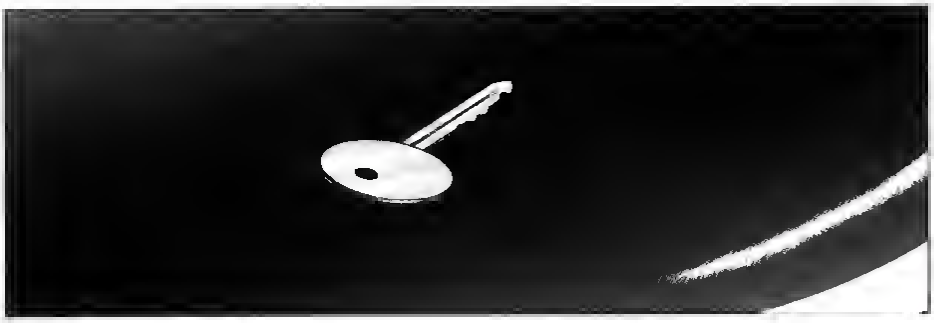
WELL, HOW ABOUT THAT?
IT WAS THAT WAY FROM THE BEGINNING, WASN'T IT?
I LIKED MYSELF.
FROM THE BEGIN-NING.
THAT'S WHY I RAN AWAY FROM THOSE WHO DENIED ME...
AND CLING TO ANY-ONE WHO CLING TO ME.

THAT'S HOW I GOT THIS FAR.
TO LOOK FOR THE PLACE WHERE I BELONG...
ALL THE WAY TO THIS FAR-AWAY PLACE...
TA-WOO-WOO-WOO...

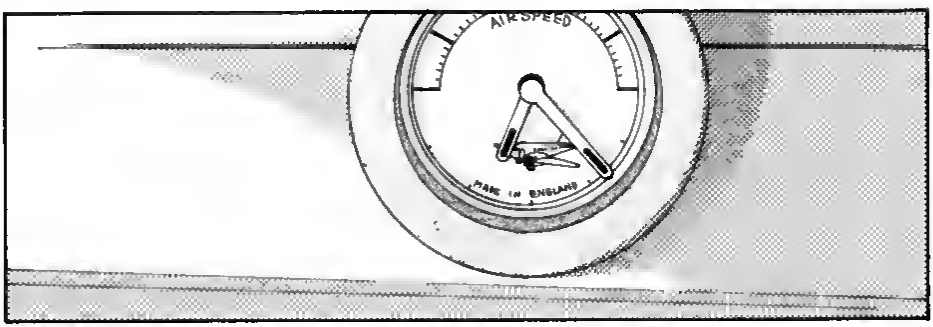
MAHORI,

EACH TIME THAT YOU TREATED ME KINDLY LIKE I WAS A SMALL THING... A WEAK THING... A PITIFUL THING...

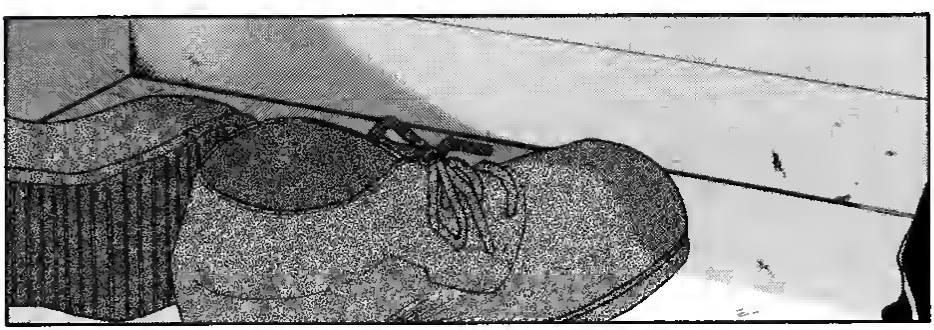
I FELT LIKE I WAS GETTING MORE AND MORE LONELY.



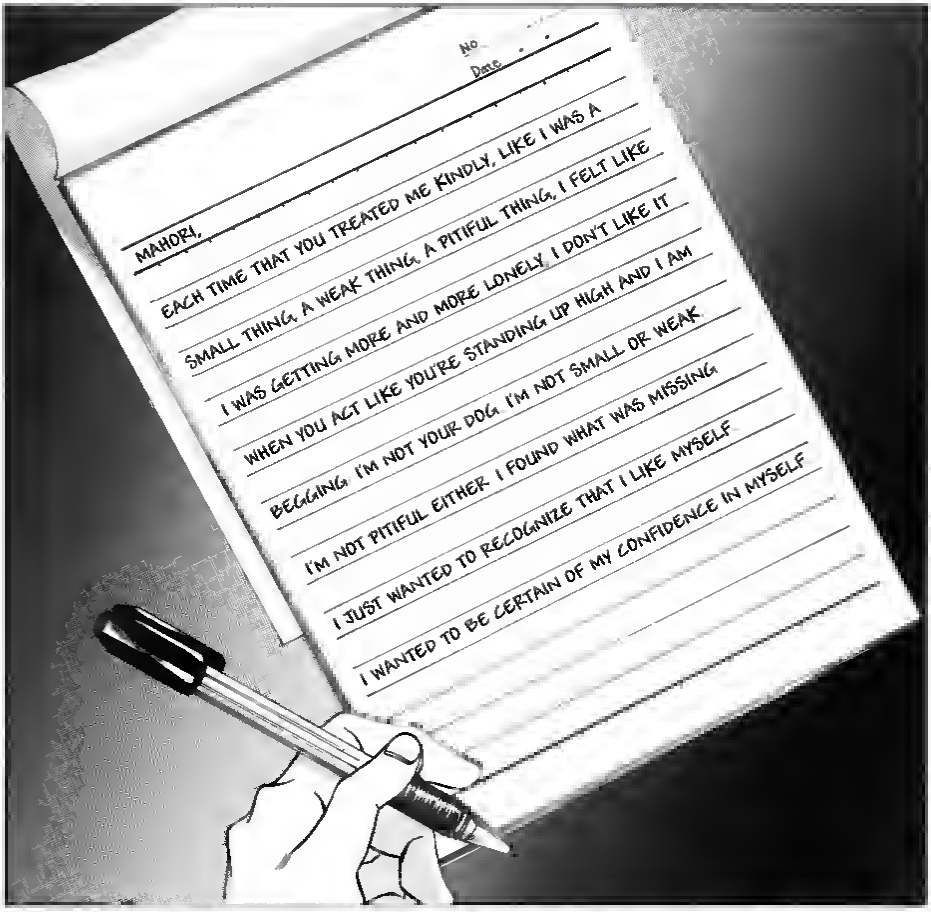
I FOUND WHAT WAS MISSING.



I JUST WANTED TO RECOGNIZE THAT I LIKE MYSELF.



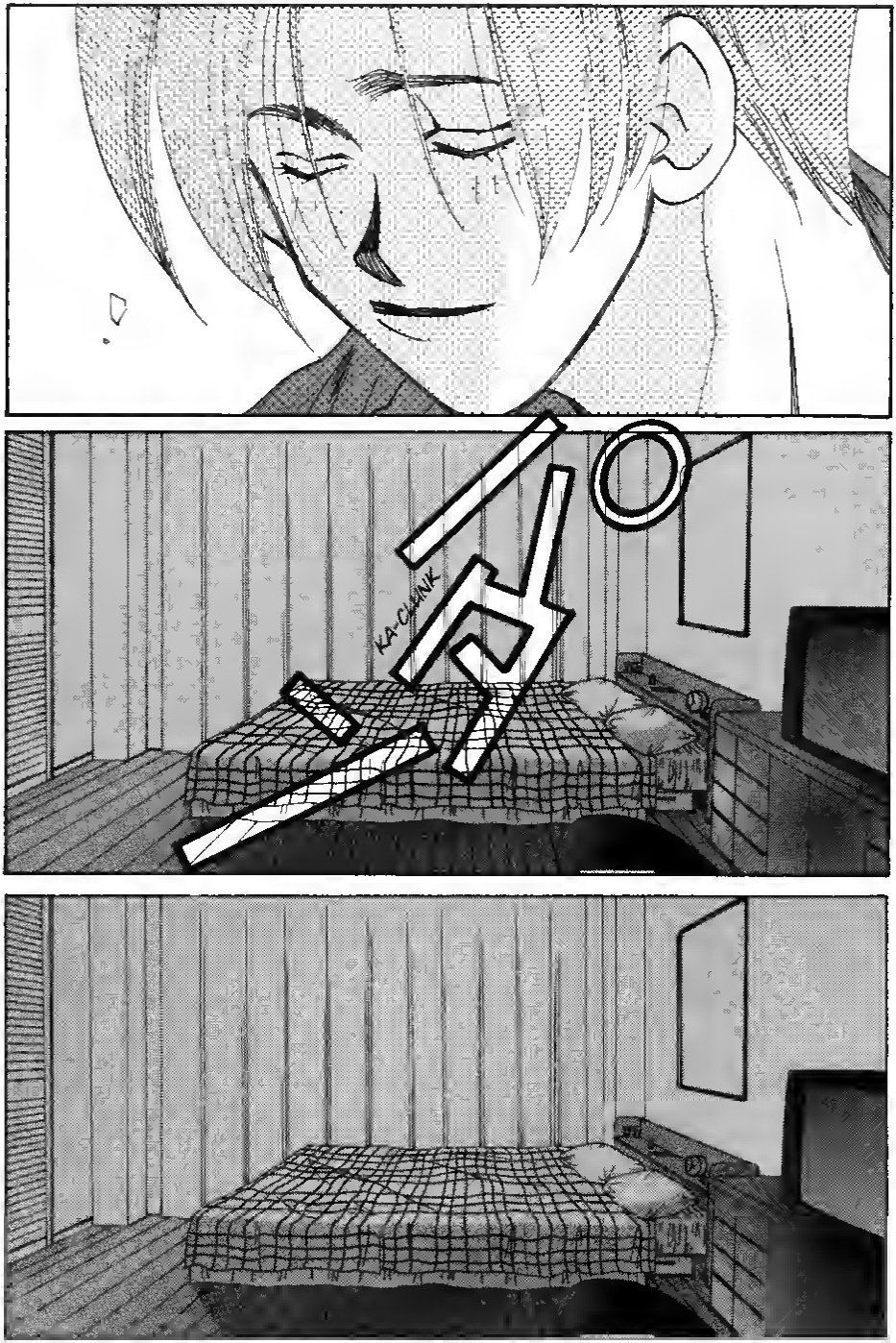
I WANTED TO BE CERTAIN OF MY CONFIDENCE IN MYSELF.


No
Date
MAHORI,
EACH TIME THAT YOU TREATED ME KINDLY, LIKE I WAS A SMALL THING, A WEAK THING, A PITIFUL THING, I FELT LIKE I WAS GETTING MORE AND MORE LONELY. I DON'T LIKE IT WHEN YOU ACT LIKE YOU'RE STANDING UP HIGH AND I AM BEGGING. I'M NOT YOUR DOG. I'M NOT SMALL OR WEAK. I'M NOT PITIFUL EITHER. I FOUND WHAT WAS MISSING I JUST WANTED TO RECOGNIZE THAT I LIKE MYSELF I WANTED TO BE CERTAIN OF MY CONFIDENCE IN MYSELF

IT'S KIND OF... A USELESS NOTE.
IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE HE'D UNDERSTAND AT ALL...

.....

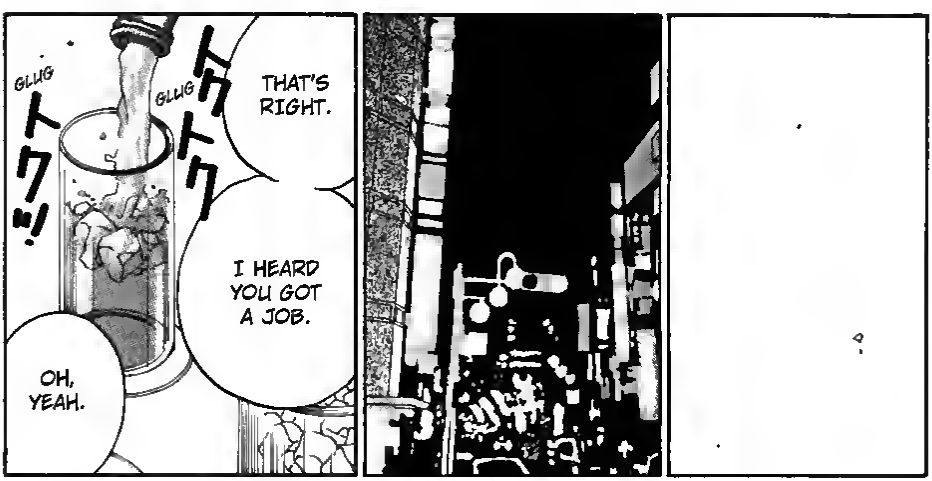
SCR TCH
かきかき
SCR TCH
かきっ
...THERE.
RRIP
びーっ
I GIVE UP.
CRUMPLE
くしゃ
.....
THAT'S THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT.
...YES!
SWAP


KA-CHUNK

GHATCHA
...I'M HOME...
IS HE NOT BACK YET...?

TO MAHORI,
THANKS FOR EVERYTHING.
I'LL BE COMPLETELY FINE ON MY OWN NOW!
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.
BYE BYE.
TSUBAKI SUGIURA
LODGING FEES UP TO NOW
(SORRY IT'S NOT NEARLY ENOUGH)

...ARE YOU SERIOUS...?


GLUG
GLUG
THAT'S RIGHT.
I HEARD YOU GOT A JOB.
OH, YEAH.

STARTING NEXT MONTH,
I'LL BE A CRAM SCHOOL TUTOR.
THAT'S SO LIKE YOU.
HA HA HA!
THINKING OF BANGING SOME HIGH SCHOOLERS, HUH?
YOU HUNGRY?
I'LL GO ORDER.
I THINK I'LL ORDER SOMETHING.
OH, ME TOO.
I'LL HAVE A COMBO PIZZA.
THANK YOU!
CHINK
HEY!
A CHEESE OMELET, A COMBO PIZZA, AND FOUR GRILLED RICE BALLS AT OUR TABLE, PLEASE!
COMING RIGHT UP.

OH, IT'S OKAY...
SORRY!
AH!

HE WAS SURROUNDED BY PEOPLE...

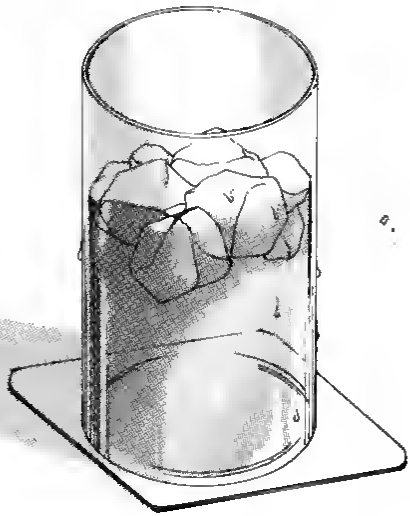
AND YET...

HE LOOKED LIKE HE WAS WAITING FOR SOMEONE...

YOU ALONE?
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT.
I'M WITH THOSE GUYS...
...NO,

...I'M ALONE.

CHAPTER 14: TSUBAKI AND KOUTAROU

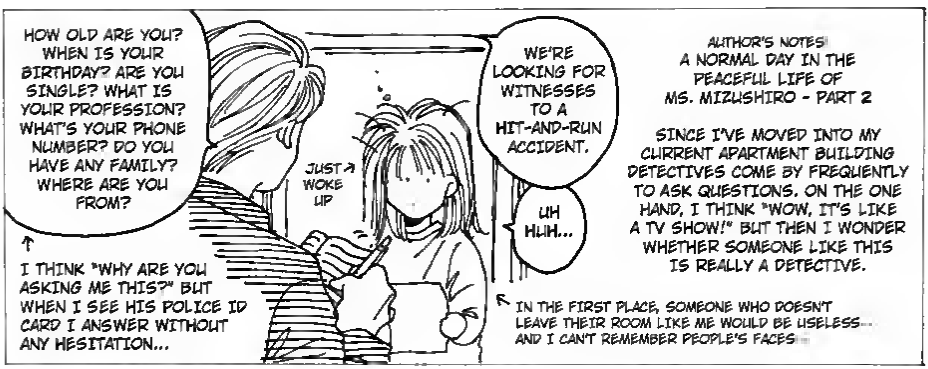


HOW DID YOU KNOW...?

A LONG TIME AFTER THAT NIGHT, HE TOLD ME,

"IF I HAD MET YOU JUST ONE DAY EARLIER OR ONE DAY LATER,

WE WOULDN'T HAVE HAD THE KIND OF RELATIONSHIP WE DID."


HOW OLD ARE YOU? WHEN IS YOUR BIRTHDAY? ARE YOU SINGLE? WHAT IS YOUR PROFESSION? WHAT'S YOUR PHONE NUMBER? DO YOU HAVE ANY FAMILY? WHERE ARE YOU FROM?
I THINK "WHY ARE YOU ASKING ME THIS?" BUT WHEN I SEE HIS POLICE ID CARD I ANSWER WITHOUT ANY HESITATION...
JUST WOKE UP
WE'RE LOOKING FOR WITNESSES TO A HIT-AND-RUN ACCIDENT.
UH HUH...
IN THE FIRST PLACE, SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T LEAVE THEIR ROOM LIKE ME WOULD BE USELESS... AND I CAN'T REMEMBER PEOPLE'S FACES.

AUTHOR'S NOTES:
A NORMAL DAY IN THE PEACEFUL LIFE OF MS. MIZUSHIRO - PART 2

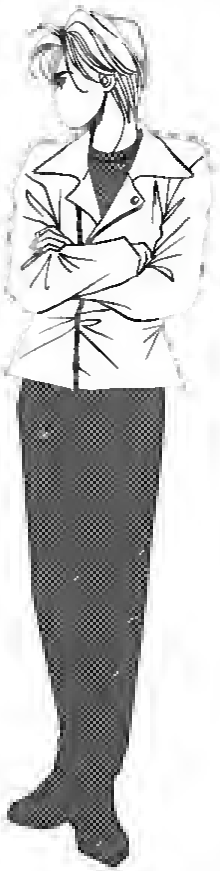
SINCE I'VE MOVED INTO MY CURRENT APARTMENT BUILDING DETECTIVES COME BY FREQUENTLY TO ASK QUESTIONS. ON THE ONE HAND, I THINK "WOW, IT'S LIKE A TV SHOW!" BUT THEN I WONDER WHETHER SOMEONE LIKE THIS IS REALLY A DETECTIVE.

I'M A 2ND YEAR ECONOMICS STUDENT AT KEIO UNIVERSITY.
I'M FROM YOKOHAMA IN KANAGAWA PREFECTURE AND I'M CURRENTLY LIVING IN SHIBUYA, TOKYO.
I'M ONE OF THE ONES WHO'S AVERAGE BY THE TIME THEY TURN 20...
I WAS TREATED LIKE A PRODIGY UNTIL HIGH SCHOOL, BUT MY GRADES IN COLLEGE ARE DEFINITELY RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE.
AND BECAUSE I WAS BORN IN FEBRUARY, I'M A PISCES.
BY THE WAY, MY BLOOD TYPE IS B,
EVEN THOUGH I'M STILL 19.
SO... SPEAKING OF WHICH, RIGHT NOW...
I'M BISEXUAL, BUT RECENTLY MOST OF MY PARTNERS HAVE BEEN MALE.

I WAS JUST PICKED UP BY A GUY NAMED TSUBAKI SUGIURA.
YOU CAN GO AHEAD AND START EATING...
I'M STARVING...
REALLY? THANKS.
MAN, I JUST REALIZED IT, BUT I REALLY DO ONLY EAT PASTA. IT'S THE INFLUENCE OF THE GUY I BROKE UP WITH.
IT'S HERE! PASTA WITH CLAM SAUCE! ♡
I'M SO HUNGRY!

AUTHOR'S NOTES:

KOU...

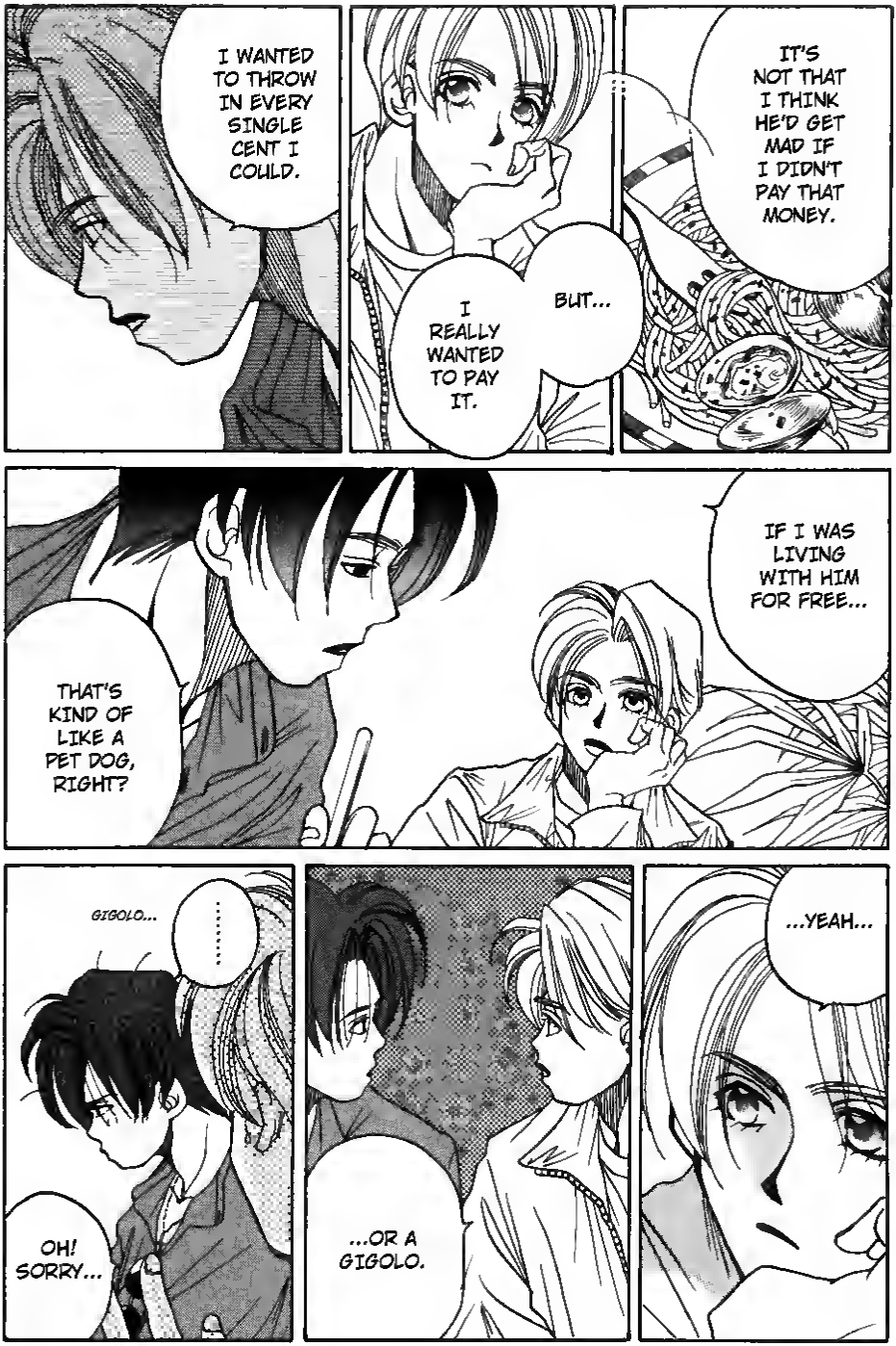


I TRY TO DRESS HIM IN WHITE CLOTHING. STUFF THAT'S KIND OF SPORTY. THE LENGTH OF HIS COAT IS RATHER SHORT AND SEEMS TO EMPHASIZE HIS HIGH WAIST. DAMN YOU, PRETENDING TO BE A CLEAN-CUT, HANDSOME GUY!

BUT HE SEEMS QUITE TALKATIVE.
OH, AND BY THE WAY...
HE GIVES OFF THE FEELING OF BEING RATHER QUIET AND SENSITIVE...
WHAT?
YOU WON'T GET MAD?
WHAT?
BUT THERE'S A REASON I STARTED TALKING TO YOU.
IT'S BEEN HARD TO SAY SINCE I STARTED EATING,
I DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY.

I LEFT ALL THE PAY I GOT AT WORK TODAY AS THE RENT UP TO NOW.
TODAY, I BROKE UP WITH THE GUY I WAS LIVING WITH.
YEAH, IT'S A LONG STORY, BUT...
NO MONEY?
I'M FLAT BROKE.
I DIDN'T REALIZE IT UNTIL I CAME IN HERE.
IT WAS FINE WHEN I BOLDLY LEFT, BUT...
REALLY?
I'LL TREAT YOU, SO EAT UP.
OH, FINE.
YEP.
I'M SO SORRY!
SO, YOU THOUGHT YOU'D MOOCH OFF ME?
BOW

EXCUSE ME!
CREAM CROQUETTES, SQUASH GRATIN, AND AGEDASHI TOFU, PLEASE.
ORDER SOMETHING ELSE IF YOU WANT.
BE MY GUEST.
REALLY? I COULD EAT QUITE A BIT.
GO ON.
SOMEHOW HE'S CUTE...
GOBBLE DOWN
IT'S LIKE I CAN'T HATE HIM.
NORMALLY SOMEONE LIKE THIS WOULD BE IN FOR A BEATING, BUT...
DID YOU JUST THINK "YOU BASTARD?" I'M SORRY...
I'M JUST HUNGRY.
...NO...
ARGH! I JUST THOUGHT "HE'S CUTE."
WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?!
SLUSH
OH, YOU REALLY ARE MAD, HUH?
I'M SORRY.
BUT HE'S STILL EATING

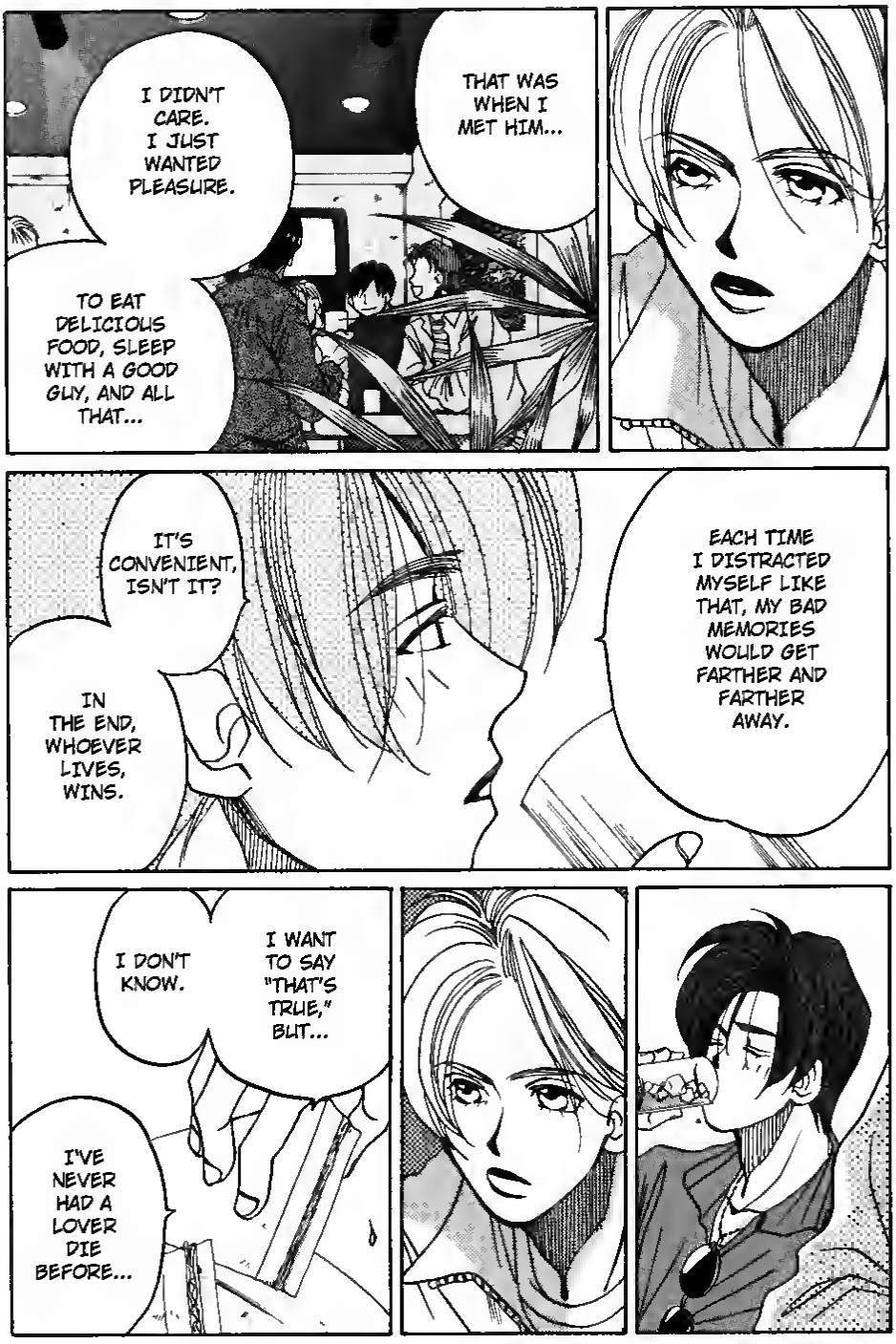

I WANTED TO THROW IN EVERY SINGLE CENT I COULD.
I REALLY WANTED TO PAY IT.
BUT...
IT'S NOT THAT I THINK HE'D GET MAD IF I DIDN'T PAY THAT MONEY.
THAT'S KIND OF LIKE A PET DOG, RIGHT?
IF I WAS LIVING WITH HIM FOR FREE...
GIGOLO...
.....
OH! SORRY...
...OR A GIGOLO.
...YEAH...

BUT I WAS ON THE VERGE OF BEING USELESS.
HE WAS SUCH A NICE GUY TOO...
WHILE I WAS BEING PAMPERED BY HIM LIKE A DOG...
I WAS STARTING TO FEEL LIKE I REALLY WAS A DOG...
OR LOWER THAN A DOG...

SO I GAVE UP ON IT... THAT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP...
CHINK

I WAS AT A REALLY LOW POINT...
BECAUSE WHEN I MET HIM...
GLUG
GLUG
CHINK
IT BECAME...
A TEMPORARY SALVATION...
BUT...
CLINK
CLINK
HERE YOU ARE. SORRY FOR THE WAIT.
THANK YOU...

EVER DIED IN AN ACCIDENT?
C-COULD HE BE DRUNK?
NO, I'M STILL...
...HUH? ME?
SHE WAS JUST A GIRL...
AND IT'S SO PITIFUL THAT HER HEAD GOT BRUTALLY SMASHED APART.
HUMANS BREAK SO EASILY...

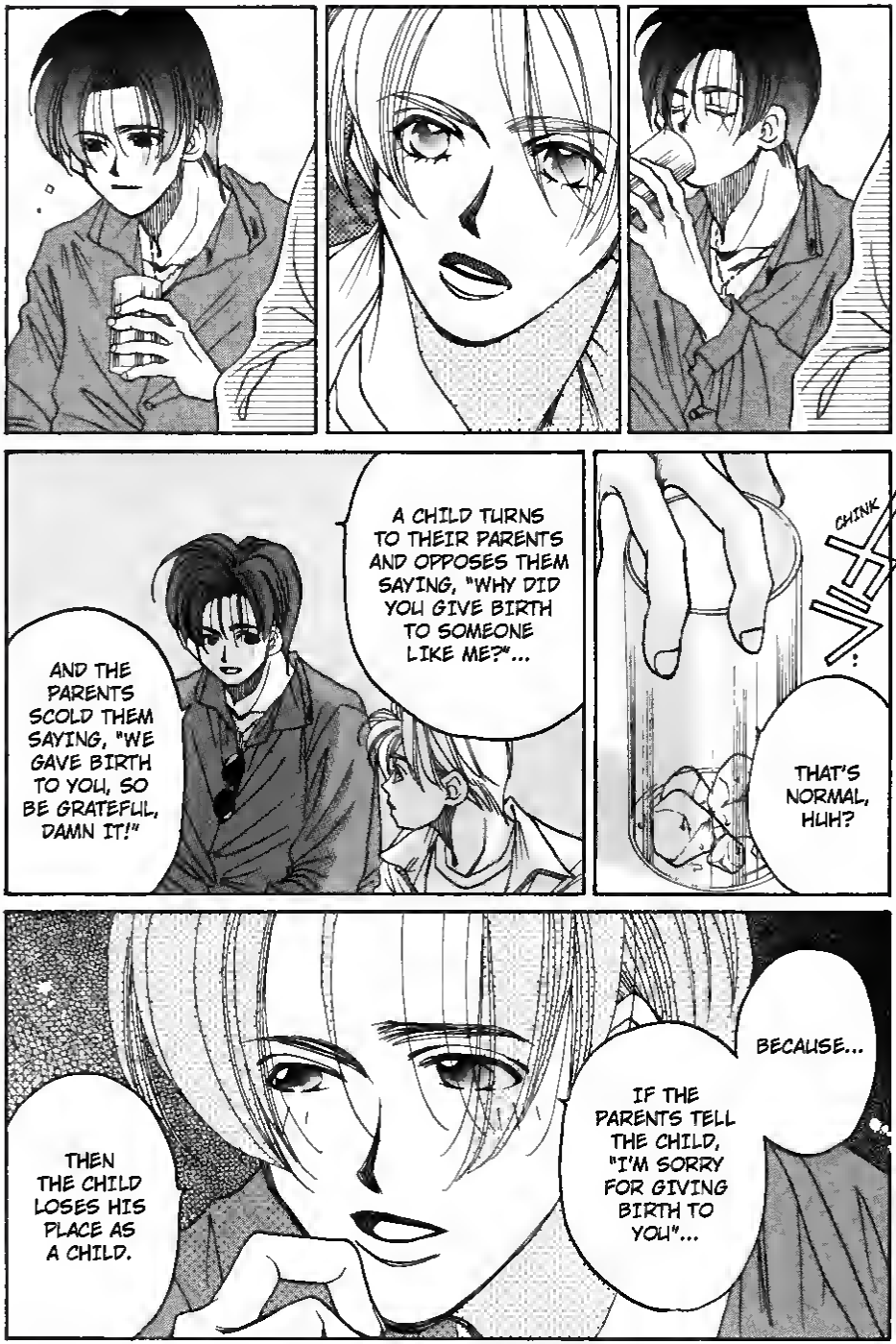

I DIDN'T CARE. I JUST WANTED PLEASURE.
TO EAT DELICIOUS FOOD, SLEEP WITH A GOOD GUY, AND ALL THAT...
THAT WAS WHEN I MET HIM...
IT'S CONVENIENT, ISN'T IT?
IN THE END, WHOEVER LIVES, WINS.
EACH TIME I DISTRACTED MYSELF LIKE THAT, MY BAD MEMORIES WOULD GET FARTHER AND FARTHER AWAY.
I DON'T KNOW.
I WANT TO SAY "THAT'S TRUE," BUT...
I'VE NEVER HAD A LOVER DIE BEFORE...

...
MUNCH
YOU'RE SERIOUSLY LISTENING TO ME, AREN'T YOU?
I DON'T KNOW IF SHE WAS MY LOVER...
MAYBE I WAS JUST DEPENDING ON HER...
AFTER SUDDENLY DECIDING TO COME TO TOKYO.
IT WAS A SITUATION WHERE I WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SURVIVE WITHOUT SOMEONE TO HELP ME.
IT'S NO GOOD FALLING IN LOVE WHEN THINGS ARE GOING BADLY, HUH?
I WAS DRAWN TO HER WITHOUT KNOWING WHETHER I REALLY LOVED HER.
MAYBE I JUST WANTED TO HEAL MY OWN WOUNDS.

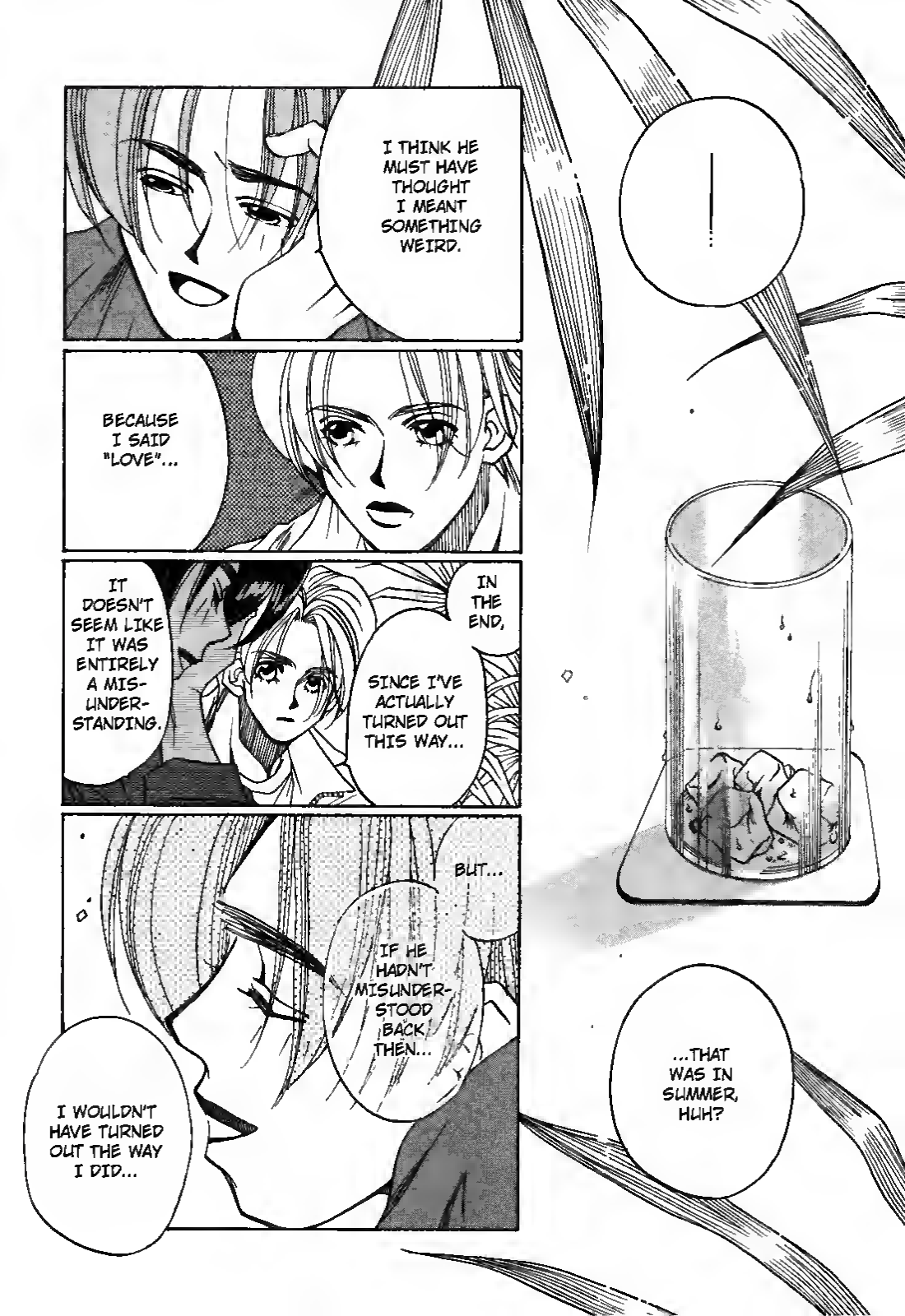
EVEN THOUGH SHE SAID,
"DON'T RUN AWAY."
THERE WERE THINGS THAT I DID FOR HER THAT...
I WOULDN'T HAVE DONE IF I REALLY LOVED HER.
I HAD RUN AWAY TO TOKYO, YOU SEE.
?
FROM MY FAMILY.

HE WAS MY FIRST GUY.
MY HOME TOWN IS IN GUNMA, BUT...
IN HIGH SCHOOL I HAD A RELATION-SHIP WITH A TEACHER...
WHO WAS MALE.
HE EVEN BROKE INTO MY HOUSE...
AND REVEALED EVERYTHING TO MY PARENTS.
CLATTER
I BROKE UP WITH HIM WHEN I GRADUATED, BUT...
THAT TEACHER WAS PERSISTENT.

I WAS THE ONE BEING CRUEL FROM THE BEGINNING.
YEAH, BUT...
THAT'S... REALLY CRUEL, ISN'T IT?
GACK
IN TRUTH, THE THINGS I NEEDED TO DO ON MY OWN...
I PRESSED THEM ON MY TEACHER AND THEN LAID DOWN LIKE IT WAS HIS FAULT.
I WAS AFRAID TO DO THEM MYSELF...
AND LET MY TEACHER PLAY THE DIRTY ROLE...
INTENDING MYSELF TO BE SOMETHING LIKE A VICTIM.

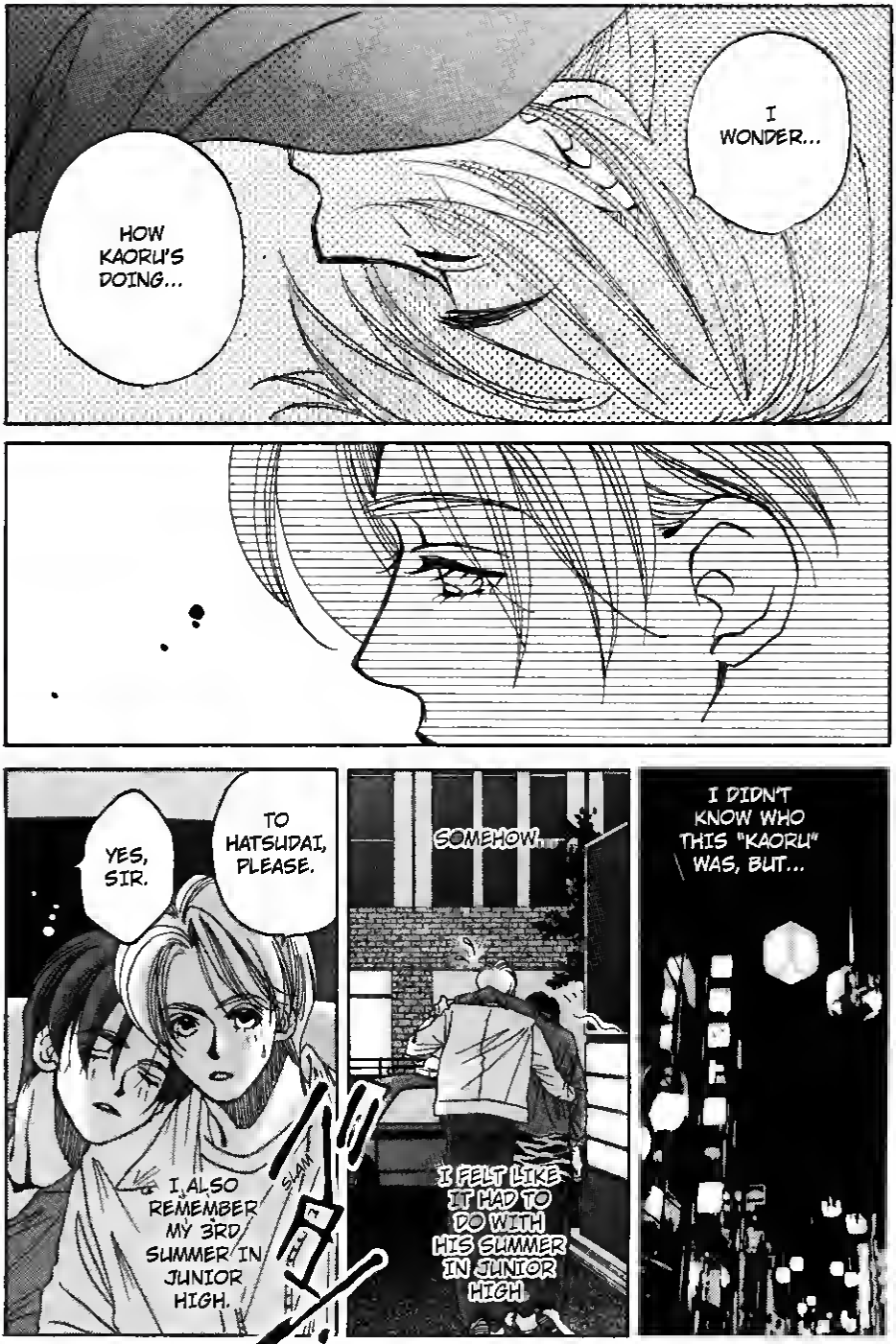

A CHILD TURNS TO THEIR PARENTS AND OPPOSES THEM SAYING, "WHY DID YOU GIVE BIRTH TO SOMEONE LIKE ME?"...
AND THE PARENTS SCOLD THEM SAYING, "WE GAVE BIRTH TO YOU, SO BE GRATEFUL, DAMN IT!"
CHINK
THAT'S NORMAL, HUH?
BECAUSE...
IF THE PARENTS TELL THE CHILD, "I'M SORRY FOR GIVING BIRTH TO YOU"...
THEN THE CHILD LOSES HIS PLACE AS A CHILD.

BEING TOLD SOMETHING LIKE, "IF ONLY YOU WERE A GIRL, EVERYTHING WOULD BE FINE,"
IS ALREADY ENOUGH.
I WONDER WHY THEY...
DIDN'T LOVE ME.
IN MY 3RD YEAR OF JUNIOR HIGH, A GOOD FRIEND TOLD ME THE REASON.
HE SAID,
"I DON'T LIKE GUYS."


I THINK HE MUST HAVE THOUGHT I MEANT SOMETHING WEIRD.
BECAUSE I SAID "LOVE"...
IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE IT WAS ENTIRELY A MIS-UNDER-STANDING.
IN THE END,
SINCE I'VE ACTUALLY TURNED OUT THIS WAY...
BUT...
IF HE HADN'T MISUNDER-STOOD BACK THEN...
I WOULDN'T HAVE TURNED OUT THE WAY I DID...
...THAT WAS IN SUMMER, HUH?

WOW...
YOU SEE YOUR-SELF... SO CLEARLY, HUH?
I DON'T HAVE...
THAT KIND OF COURAGE.

THAT'S BECAUSE...
I LIKE MYSELF!
すぅ...
SLUMP
YOU'RE THE ONLY PERSON...
WHO CAN MAKE YOURSELF HAPPY... RIGHT?


I WONDER...
HOW KAORU'S DOING...
TO HATSUDAI, PLEASE.
YES, SIR.
I ALSO REMEMBER MY 3RD SUMMER IN JUNIOR HIGH.
SLAM
SOMEHOW...
I FELT LIKE IT HAD TO DO WITH HIS SUMMER IN JUNIOR HIGH
I DIDN'T KNOW WHO THIS "KAORU" WAS, BUT...

FOR NOW...
OH...
MY PLACE...
YOU CAN STAY OVER AT MY PLACE TONIGHT IF YOU WANT.
YOU HAVEN'T DECIDED WHERE TO GO, RIGHT?
THAT'S NICE OF YOU.
THANK YOU.
BUT HEY, THAT KIND OF THINKING IS BEING NICE.
IT'S JUST SOMETHING YOU DO, RIGHT?
FIRST OF ALL...
IT'S NOT REALLY BEING NICE...
IF THAT SUMMER HADN'T HAPPENED...
THEN I TOO PROBABLY WOULDN'T HAVE TURNED OUT THIS WAY...
WHERE ARE WE GOING?

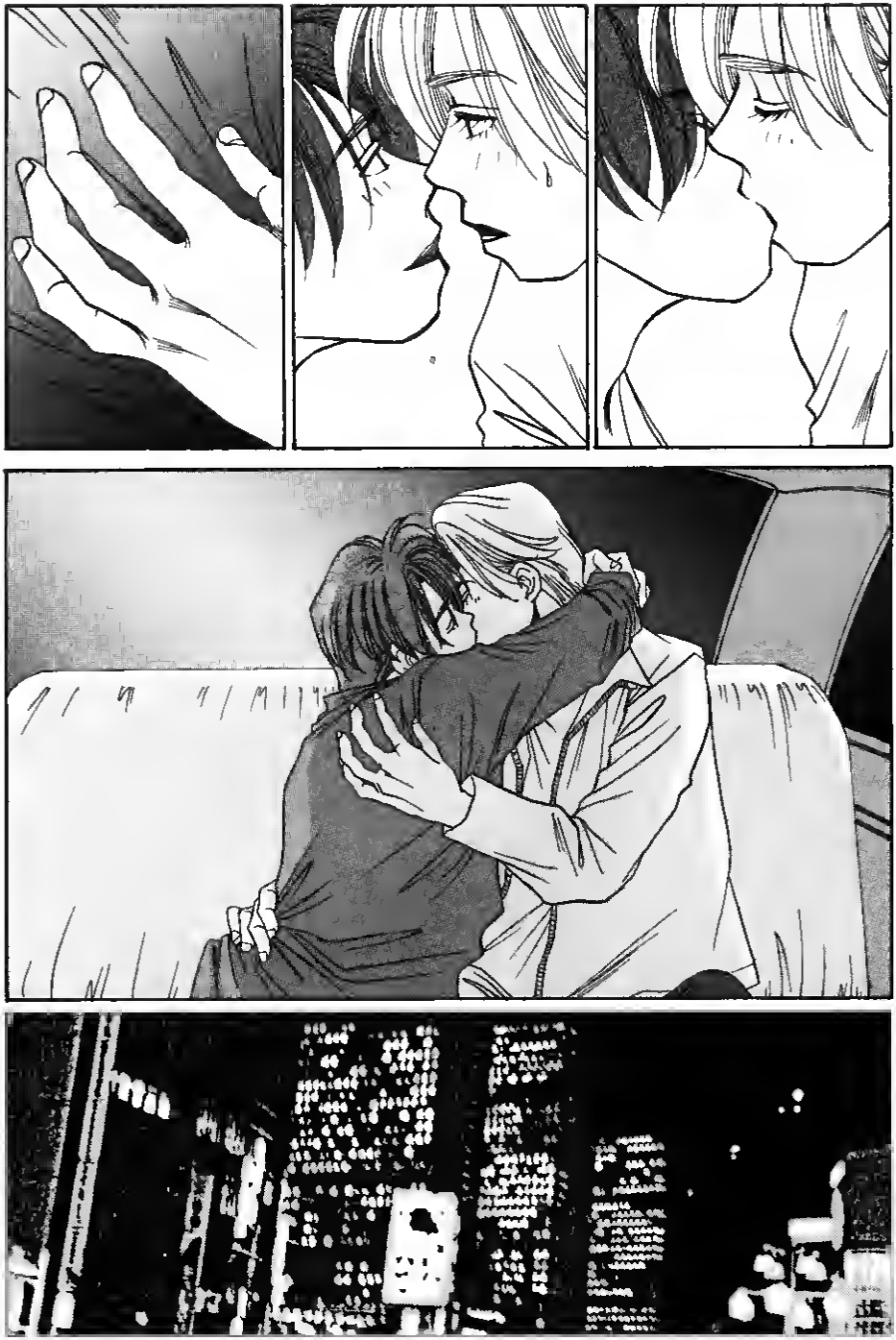
I PRETEND TO BE A GOOD PERSON.
I JUST BEHAVE LIKE A GOOD PERSON.
IT'S NOT BEING NICE.
...I HATE MYSELF...
...BECAUSE...
TDK!
SOMEONE LIKE ME...
IS A HYPOCRITE.

...OF COURSE NOT...
DID IT FEEL GOOD?
WELL, DID YOU LIKE YOURSELF WHEN YOU PRETENDED TO BE A GOOD PERSON?
WELL, THEN YOU AREN'T A HYPOCRITE, ARE YOU?
AT LEAST, NICER THAN YOU THINK YOU ARE.
NICE PERSON.
YOU'RE JUST A NORMAL...

I'M NOT DRUNK, YOU KNOW.
.....
I EVEN GET ADMONISHED BY A DRUNK.

...AH.
...I'M BAD...
AT GETTING KISSED.
WHEN I SEE A FACE SO CLOSE TO ME, I GET NERVOUS, YOU KNOW.
SOMEHOW...
IT SEEMS LIKE IT WILL SEE RIGHT THROUGH ALL OF ME...

IT'S OKAY TO SHOW ALL OF YOURSELF.



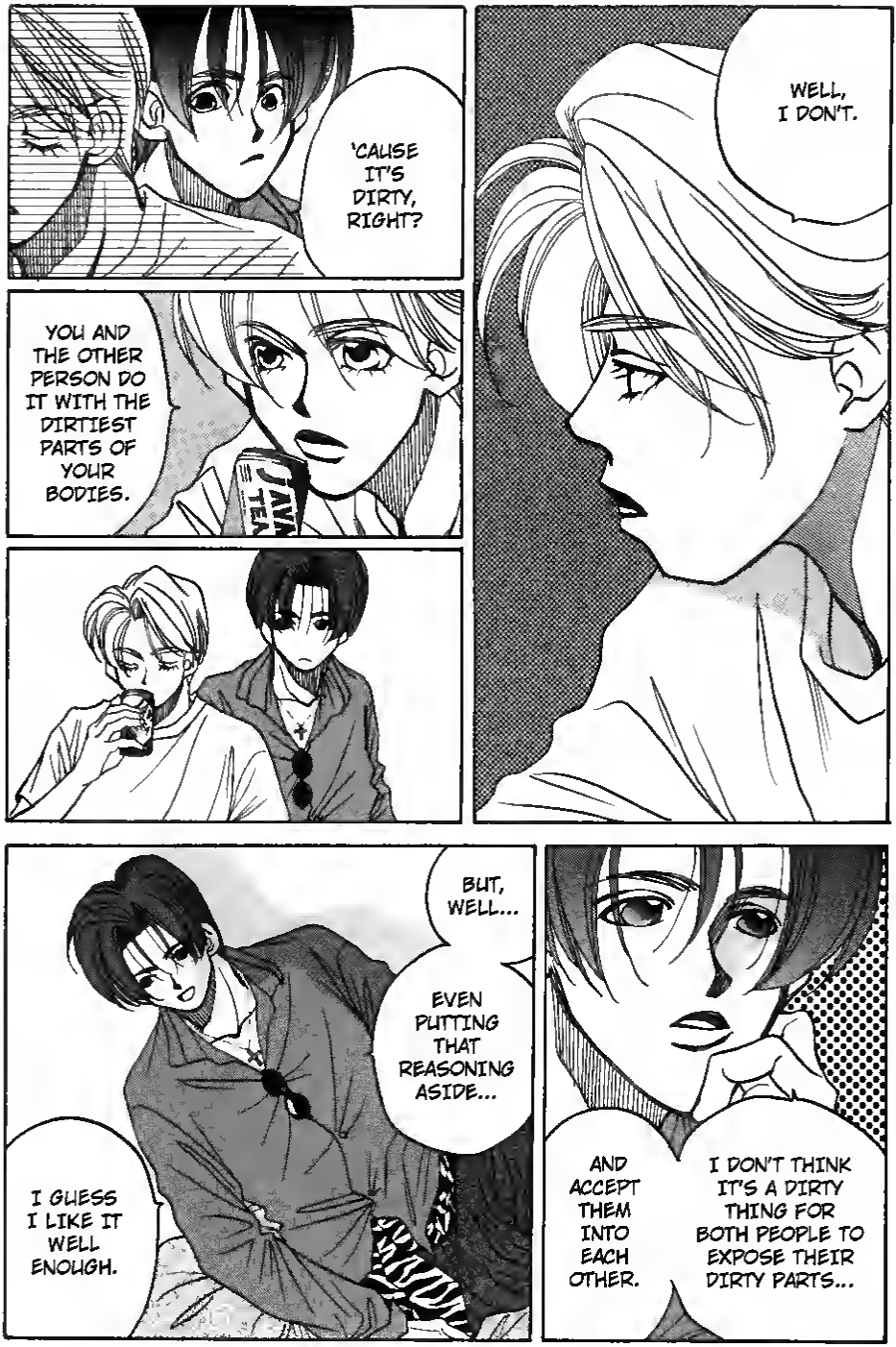
CHAPTER 15: FRIENDS

THAT NIGHT,
FOR THE FIRST TIME, I OPENED THE DOOR TO MY APARTMENT FOR SOMEONE ELSE.

HE'S MAKING THE RENT A LITTLE CHEAPER FOR ME.
MY RELATIVE IS THE MANAGER HERE.
HM...
WOW, IT'S QUITE SPACIOUS.
YOU'RE LIVING IN SUCH A NICE PLACE, KOUTAROU.
I'M COMING IN~
FEELS REALLY, REALLY NICE! ♡
ばふん
FWUMP
OH, IT'S SO SOFT!
...WHICH YOU SEEM TO BE DOING ALREADY...
カパ。
KAPAP
WANT SOMETHING TO DRINK?
FOR NOW, JUST MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME.

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME ANOTHER PERSON HAS USED THAT BED.
IT SEEMS...
KIND OF WEIRD...
HERE YOU GO.

HOW DO YOU MANAGE THAT?
BUT YOU'RE POPULAR, RIGHT?
I DON'T REALLY PLAN IT.
WE HAVE A QUICK ONE RIGHT AWAY...
AND SAY GOODBYE THEN AND THERE.
WHAT ABOUT YOU?
DO YOU LIKE SEX?
BUT DON'T YOU LIKE SEX?
I THINK THAT WOULD CERTAINLY TAKE CARE OF IT...


'CAUSE IT'S DIRTY, RIGHT?
WELL, I DON'T.
YOU AND THE OTHER PERSON DO IT WITH THE DIRTIEST PARTS OF YOUR BODIES.
BUT, WELL...
EVEN PUTTING THAT REASONING ASIDE...
I GUESS I LIKE IT WELL ENOUGH.
I DON'T THINK IT'S A DIRTY THING FOR BOTH PEOPLE TO EXPOSE THEIR DIRTY PARTS...
AND ACCEPT THEM INTO EACH OTHER.

TWO HEARTS HAPPY...
THE KIND THAT MAKES...
THERE'S BEAUTIFUL SEX TOO, ISN'T THERE?
DOES THAT REALLY EXIST?
SOME-WHERE OUT THERE...?

BECAUSE I'M DIRTY MYSELF.
I DON'T MIND BEING DIRTY...
IT DOESN'T MATTER EITHER WAY...
THE DIRTY ENCOUNTERS ARE THE CAREFREE ONES.
TO DO SOMETHING THAT APPEARS ENJOYABLE ON THE SURFACE.
USING THOSE DIRTY PARTS...
I CAN ONLY SPEND TIME WITH OTHERS...

THAT'S ALL.
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE, RIGHT?
IF IT'S NOT A REALLY MEMORABLE SITUATION OR...
A TIME WHEN YOU DID SOMETHING UNUSUAL...
LIKE USING A BLINDFOLD...
...HEY,
TSUBAKI,
DO YOU REMEMBER ALL THE SEX YOU'VE EVER HAD?

I REMEMBER ALL OF IT.
NO MATTER WHAT I DID, I REMEMBER IT ALL.
445 TIMES, INCLUDING MEN AND WOMEN.
LIKE A CRIMINAL WHO GETS LASHED 100 TIMES AND REMEMBERS THE PAIN OF EVERY SINGLE STROKE...
THAT'S PROBABLY THE SAME FEELING...

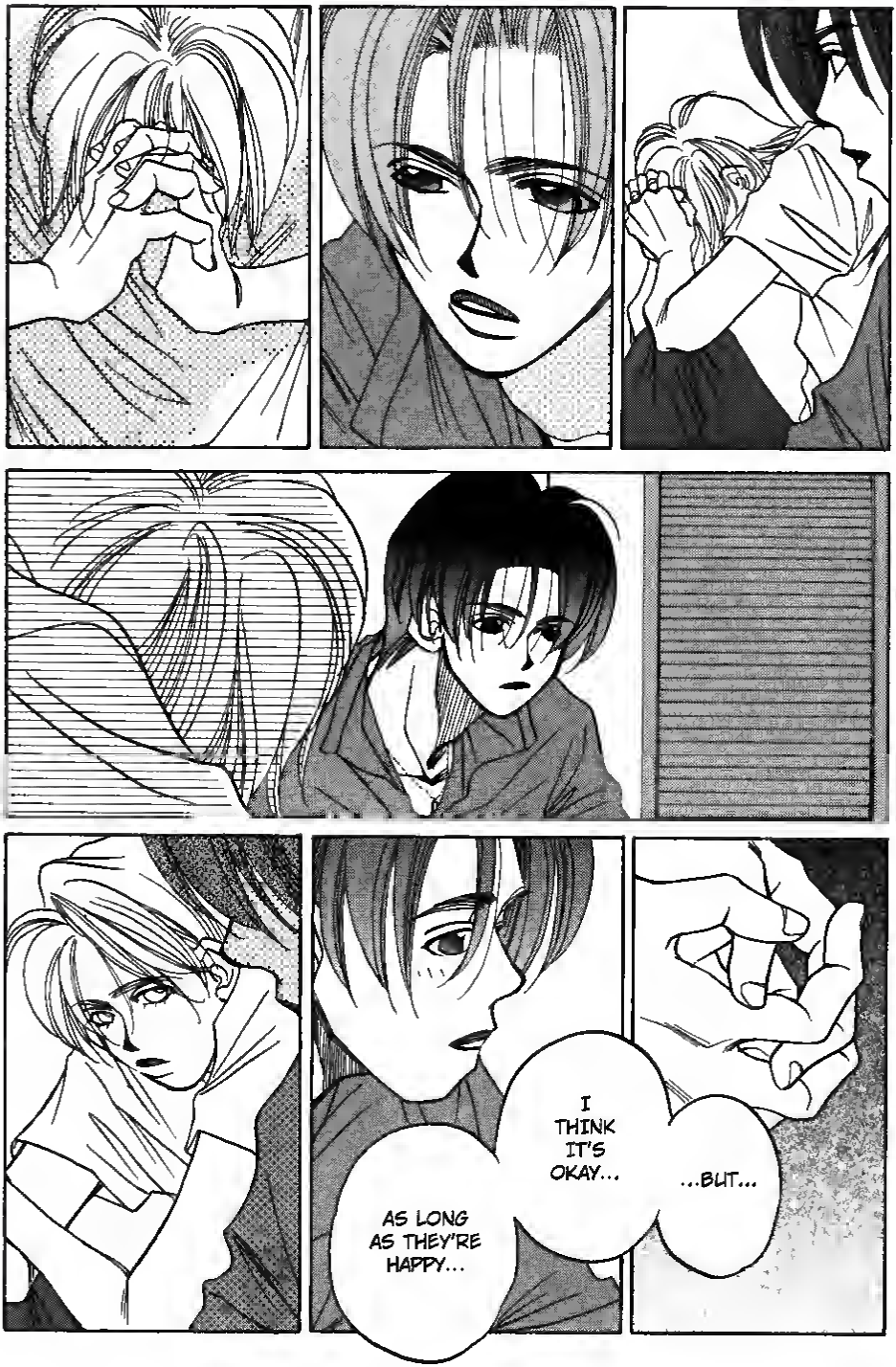
NO...
I DON'T THINK THAT'S TRUE.
TSUBAKI,
THERE ARE SOME SINS... THAT DON'T DISAPPEAR.

THE THING THAT DOESN'T EXIST IS A SIN THAT DISAPPEARS.
WE CAN'T MAKE THE SIN WE COMMITTED AS IF IT NEVER WAS.
WE MAY CRY OR APOLOGIZE OR REDEEM OURSELVES, BUT...
THAT'S WHY MY WHOLE BODY IS STAINED WITH SIN.

EVERY HUMAN IN THE WORLD IS STAINED WITH SIN.
DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU'RE ESPECIALLY DIRTY YOURSELF?
BUT EVEN SO,
...BUT...
MY SIN...
WON'T END.

HE'LL GET BIGGER AND BIGGER.
HE'S BEEN GROWING UP QUICKLY...
AT MY BROTHER'S HOUSE.
EVEN THOUGH... HE MAY NOT BE MY BROTHER'S CHILD.

EVEN THOUGH...
...HE MIGHT BE MY CHILD...
I SLEPT WITH THAT WOMAN EVEN THOUGH I DIDN'T LIKE HER AT ALL.
THINKING HOW...
IT WOULD BE GOOD IF SHE BROKE UP WITH MY BROTHER...


AS LONG AS THEY'RE HAPPY...
I THINK IT'S OKAY...
...BUT...

IF THE HAPPY PEOPLE IN THIS WORLD INCREASE BY ONE...
THEN IT REALLY DOESN'T MATTER WHO THAT SEED BELONGS TO.
THAT'S WHAT I THINK ANYWAY.
!
YOU'RE SO IDEALISTIC, TSUBAKI.

...DESPERATELY...
PRETENDING TO HAVE FUN...
AND LOOKING AFTER THE DIRTY PARTS OF SO MANY...
YOU'D GO THAT FAR EVERYDAY TO DRIFT THROUGH THE MASSES OF PEOPLE.

YOU CAN'T STAND BEING ALONE, HUH?
YOU...
LOVE PEOPLE, HUH?

I WANTED TO BE BORN AS A PERSON WITH A CLEAN HEART...
LIKE MY BROTHER.
I DON'T WANT...
TO BE ALONE...

IT'S OKAY!
SOMEONE WILL SURELY APPEAR!
IT'LL BE COMPLETELY FINE.
IT'LL BE COMPLETELY OKAY.
BECAUSE NO MATTER HOW ATROCIOUS A PERSON IS...
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE NOT TO BE LOVED BY ANYONE.

SURELY...
SOMEONE WHO WILL LOVE YOU FROM THE BOTTOM OF THEIR HEART...
EXISTS RIGHT NOW SOMEWHERE IN THIS WORLD.
SURELY...
SOMEDAY YOU CAN LOVE EACH OTHER.

THAT DAY WILL CERTAINLY COME.
WHILE YOU'RE WAITING, IT WILL FEEL AS IF IT WILL NEVER COME, BUT...
I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF IT HAPPENED UNEXPECTEDLY TOMORROW.
.....
YOU SOUND SO SURE OF YOURSELF.

I BELIEVE IT.
IT WILL BE THE SAME FOR ME...
...THAT'S RIGHT.
THAT WOULD BE WONDERFUL...

THE KIND OF BEAUTIFUL SEX...
THAT YOU'VE NEVER HAD BEFORE.
KOUTAROU.
LET'S HAVE SEX.

"I DIDN'T GET STRONG ALL ON MY OWN.
EVERYONE I'VE MET UP TO NOW HAS GIVEN ME STRENGTH.
AS I CAME INTO CONTACT WITH MANY DIFFERENT PEOPLE, I FINALLY BEGAN TO UNDERSTAND MYSELF.
BROODING OVER THINGS BY YOURSELF WON'T CHANGE ANYTHING..."

"YOU'RE SO POWERFUL, TSUBAKI."
"HUH? I'M ALL SCRAWNY."
"...THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT..."

WE HAD BOTH TAKEN EACH OTHER INTO OUR BODIES.
BEFORE I KNEW IT, NIGHT HAD BECOME DAY.
THERE WAS NO BOUNDARY.

AMAZING! A PROPER BREAKFAST!
YOU CAN REALLY COOK, HUH? THAT'S SO COOL.

SORRY TO BRING THIS UP FIRST THING...
UM...
WHAT?
IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I HAD MISO SOUP...
...IT'S SO GOOD...
REALLY? I'M GLAD. ♡
LEND ME SOME MONEY. ♡
A TRAIN TICKET.
$50 ♡
...HOW MUCH?
FOR WHAT?

I'M GOING BACK TO TAKASAKI.
...I'VE HAD A KIND OF BREAK-THROUGH.
I THINK I'LL GO BACK TO THE BEGINNING...
AND SERIOUSLY TRY TO START OVER.

AUTHOR'S NOTES:

MAHORIN...

IN HIS CASE, I SIMPLY AIM FOR CLOTHES THAT LOOK TYPICALLY GAY. (LAUGHS) LIKE TIGHT T-SHIRTS AND LEATHER... I WANT TO MAKE HIS STYLE KIND OF SEXY, BUT NOT TO THE POINT THAT IT'S INDECENT.

LET'S...
BE FRIENDS.
NEXT TIME WE MEET,
WE'LL TRY HARD TO BECOME A LITTLE BIT HAPPIER THAN NOW.
IF WE HAVEN'T BECOME HAPPY, THEN...
YOU'LL HELP ME...
AND I'LL HELP YOU...
JUST A LITTLE BIT.

YEP,
BECAUSE A HUMAN CAN'T BE GOD.
...*JUST A LITTLE BIT*?
WE CAN ONLY DO LITTLE THINGS FOR EACH OTHER RIGHT?
SINCE WE'RE NOT GOD...
...TSUBAKI SEEMED...
TO HAVE BECOME EVEN MORE POWERFUL STILL.

THAT MORNING...
A MONTH LATER...
I WOULD MEET THE LOVE OF MY LIFE.
WE SAID GOODBYE WITH A FRIENDLY KISS.

CHAPTER 16: "MAY I COME IN?"
I USED TO THINK MY LIFE WAS MEDIOCRE.
WAS JUST BECAUSE I HADN'T MET "THE ONE FOR ME" YET.
BUT THAT...

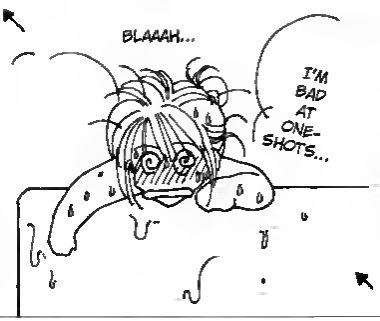
CHAPTER 16: "MAY I COME IN?"

DOUSEI AI

LOVE UNDER ONE ROOF

ABOUT THE TIME THAT I START TO FEEL DIZZY AND WANT TO THROW UP, I COME UP WITH ONE OR TWO IDEAS. THEN I THINK, "WOW, I FEEL LIKE A MANGA WRITER." (IS THAT THE ONLY TIME THAT HAPPENS?)

SPEAKING OF NOT HAVING MATERIAL, I HAVE TROUBLE WITH MATERIAL TO FILL UP THIS SPACE. SO IF YOU HAVE ANY REQUESTS, PLEASE TELL ME.

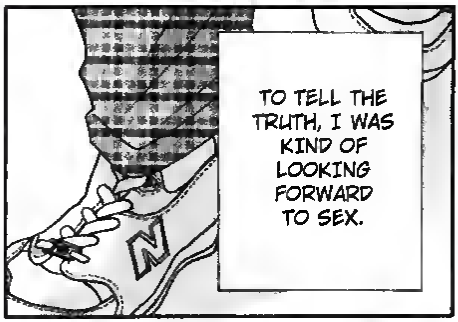


AUTHOR'S NOTES
A NORMAL DAY IN THE PEACEFUL LIFE OF MS. MIZUSHIRO - PART 3

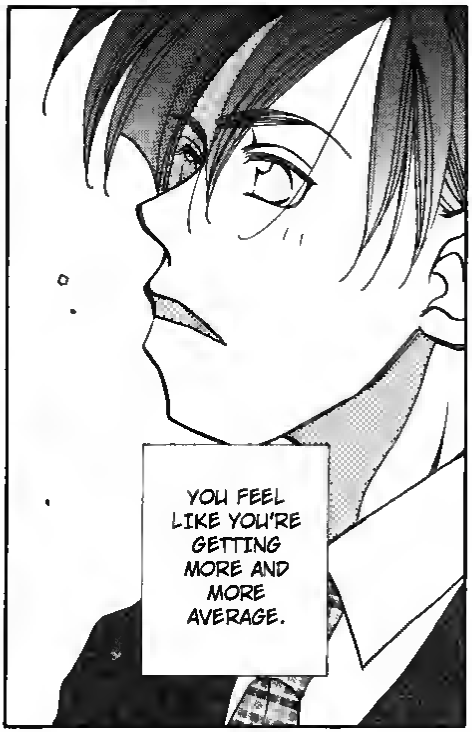
WHEN I SUDDENLY GET A JOB TO DO A ONE-SHOT COMIC, I HAVE TO COME UP WITH SOME KIND OF STORY IN A HURRY. AT TIMES LIKE THAT, I TAKE A BATH RIGHT AWAY AND GO INTO "STORY-THINKING MODE."

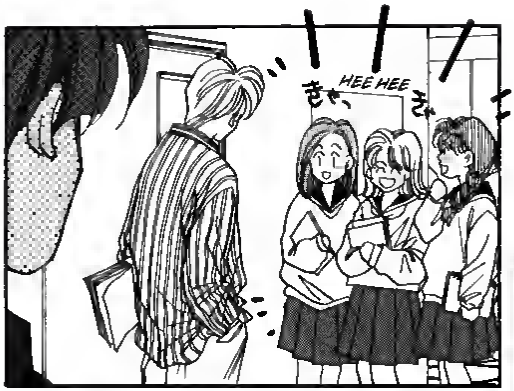
I'M A 2ND YEAR STUDENT AT A PRIVATE HIGH SCHOOL, LIVING IN THE OOTA WARD.
I WAS BORN AND RAISED IN TOKYO.
TRYING TO DOUBLE
HUGE MOUTH
WITH THE LADY FROM THE DRY CLEANING PLACE
WHERE DID THE LADY
ST FRIEND'S
WHAT'S WRONG, CHISATO?
UH... NOTHING.
GULP
I- I FEEL GROSS...
MY HOROSCOPES OFTEN SAY THAT I'M ARTISTIC OR INTELLECTUAL, BUT...
I SPEND MY DAYS IN AN EXTREMELY ORDINARY WAY.
WHAT?! ALREADY?
UM... I'M GOING TO GO.
I'M 16, AN AQUARIUS, AND BLOOD TYPE A.
I HAVE TO GO TO CRAM SCHOOL...
NOW...

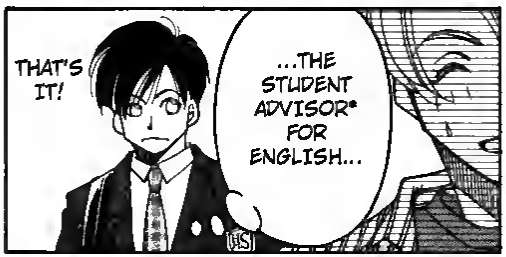
BEING A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT...
IS REALLY BORING...
OPE

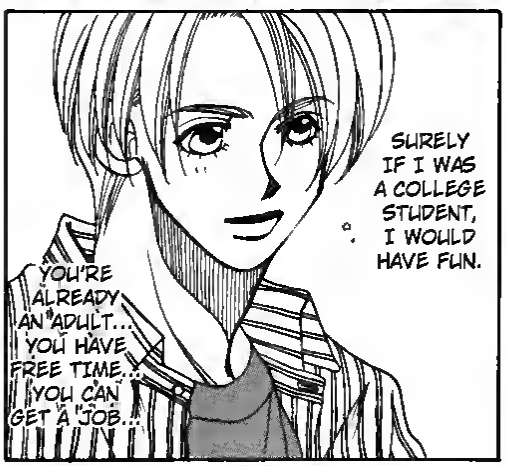

TO TELL THE TRUTH, I WAS KIND OF LOOKING FORWARD TO SEX.

I WONDERED WHETHER KNOWING ABOUT IT WOULD MAKE LIFE MORE FUN.
AFTER ALL, IT SEEMED TO BE A MATTER OF THE GREATEST IMPORTANCE FOR GUYS.


YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE GETTING MORE AND MORE AVERAGE.







*"STUDENT ADVISOR" A STUDENT WORKING PART-TIME AS AN ADVISOR TO NEW STUDENTS

CLENCH
ぐっ!
ENDURE IT UNTIL YOU GET INTO COLLEGE!
THAT'S RIGHT, CHISATO! KEEP ON STUDYING FOR NOW!
OH, MAN...
HOW NICE TO BE A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT...
YOU SEEM TO BE HAVING FUN NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO...

?
IS BEING...
A COLLEGE STUDENT EVEN MORE BORING?
HUH...?
THEN, WHEN THE HELL...
WILL MY LIFE GET FUN?!

…?
HIGH SCHOOLERS ARE GETTING SO TALL NOWADAYS...
STOMP STOMP
ばたばた
TURN
くるっ!
...I'M HOME...
GATCHA...
ガチャ

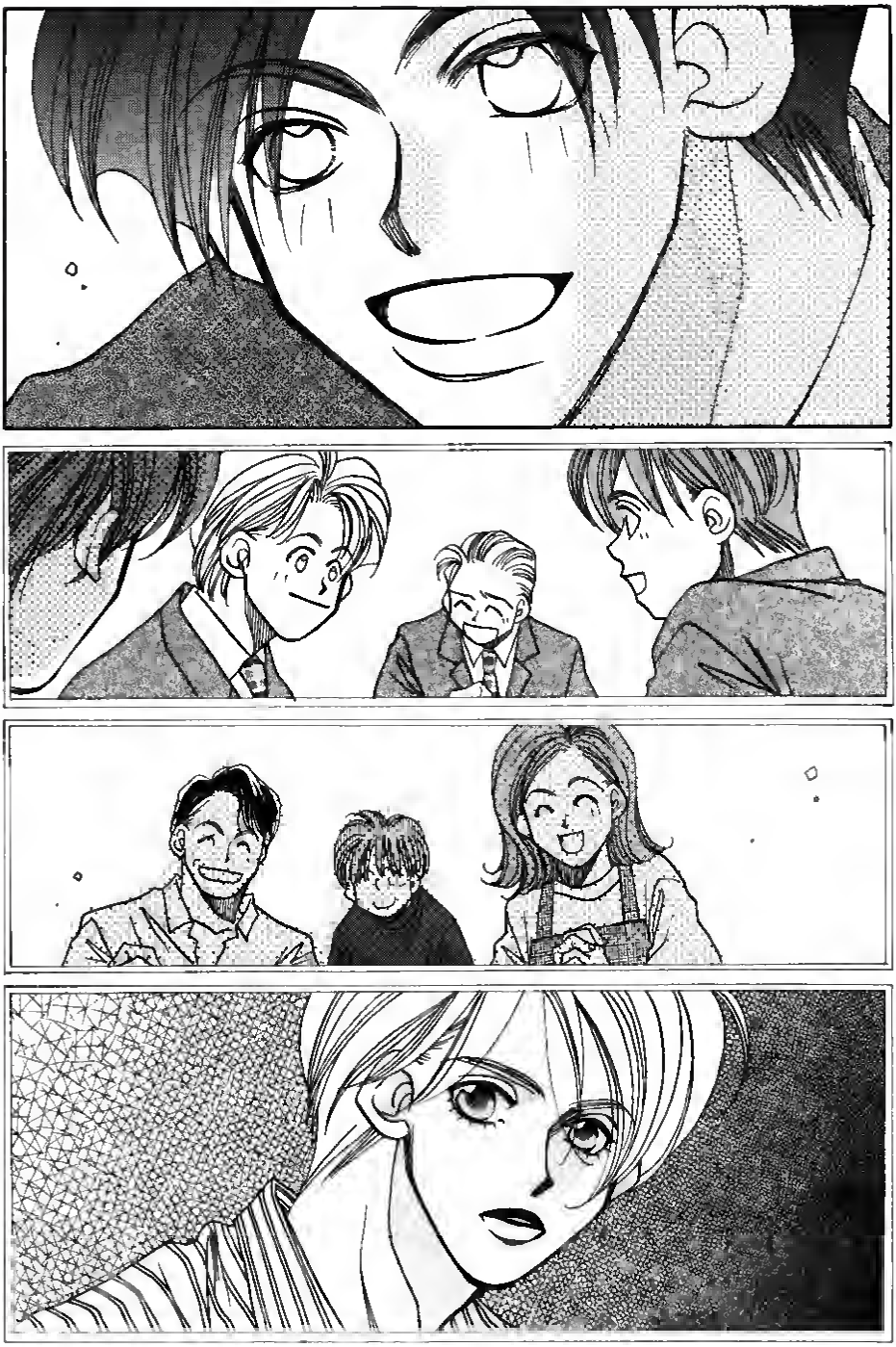
おかえり
WELCOME HOME!
YOU'RE LATE, CHISATO!
HURRY UP AND PLAY STREET FIGHTER ZERO WITH ME!
CHISATO, YOU MUST BE HUNGRY...
I MADE CHICKEN WITH RICE TODAY!
YOU LOVE THE TASTE OF KETCHUP ON RICE, RIGHT?
...SORRY, BUT I DON'T NEED DINNER...
I DON'T WANT TO EAT ANYTHING RED FOR A WHILE.
DAD, DON'T PLAY THAT GAME WITH NAOTO.
IT'S NOT FAIR WHEN YOU PLAY SAGAT...
NO WAY! CALL US IF YOU'RE GOING TO EAT OUT, WILL YOU!?
WHAT!?
I GUESS IT'S NO USE. NAOTO! LET'S FIGHT!
ARE YOU RUNNING AWAY, CHISATO?!
TELL THAT TO MY CHUN LI!
.....
どさ...
PLOP
CHATTER
CHATTER

A VERY LONG TIME AGO...
...I'M SO TIRED OF THIS...
BACK THEN, EVERY LITTLE THING WAS EXCITING.
I BELIEVED THAT WHEN I GREW UP...
I WOULD BECOME AN INCREDIBLE ADULT.

WHY DOES EVERYTHING GET MORE AND MORE BORING?
EVEN THOUGH I'M GETTING CLOSER TO BEING AN ADULT...
EVEN THOUGH I'LL BE TWENTY IN FOUR YEARS...

CHATTER
CHATTER
.....
.....
HEY, CHISATO,
HOW DID IT GO AFTERWARDS WITH CHIKA?
HUH?
NOTHING REALLY...
WHAT ARE YOU HIDING IT FOR?
YOU DID IT, RIGHT?
WHAT?!

H-H-HOW DO YOU KNOW?!
I HEARD IT FROM CHIKA'S FRIEND.
GIVE US ALL THE DETAILS!
HEY! WHAT'D YOU SAY?
STAGGER
STAGGER
THEY DID IT? REALLY?!
SHE'S PRETTY ASSERTIVE, HUH?
HOW WAS IT? HOW WAS IT?
HEY, DON'T BE SHY!
CHISATO, YOU'RE TURNING PALE.
AH, EVERYONE...
SEEMS LIKE THEY'RE HAVING FUN...
AND ME? AM I HAVING FUN?
BECAUSE I'M SMILING?



IF I COMPLAINED SAYING, "THIS IS SO BORING..."

WOULD ANYONE UNDERSTAND?

IS MR. TAKAMURA HERE...?

!!!

YES?

FOLLOWING SUIT WITH THE INTRODUCTION...
KOUTAROU TAKAMURA.
OH, I'M THE STUDENT ADVISOR...
DID YOU HAVE A QUESTION OR SOMETHING?
I'M CHISATO KANEMAKI, 2ND YEAR.
OH, YOU...
I'M SORRY ABOUT EARLIER...
.....
I WANT TO QUIT SCHOOL.

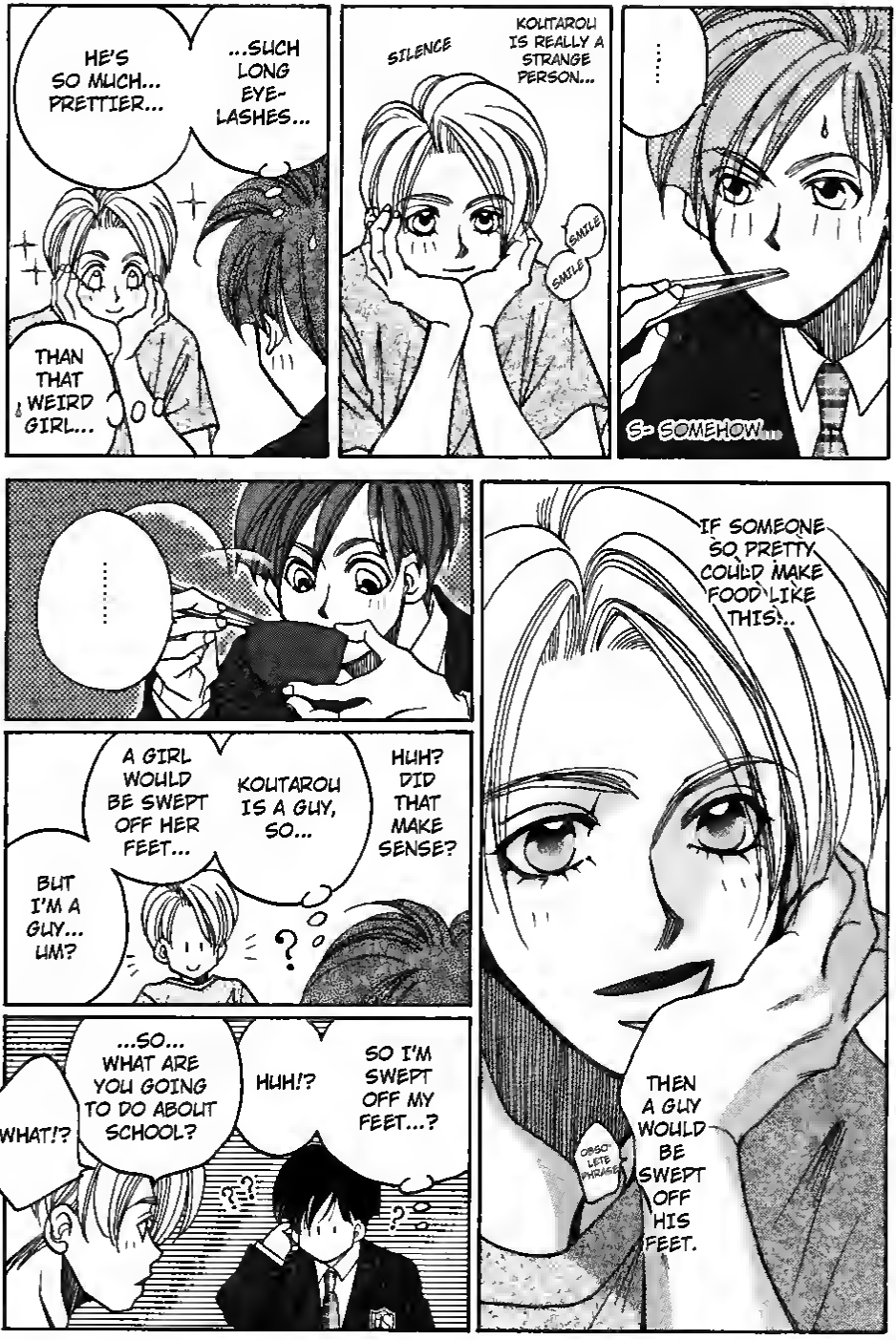
IS QUITTING A BAD IDEA?
WELL, YOU KNOW...
WANTING TO QUIT IS... UM...
OH! MR. TAKAMURA!
THERE HE IS! THERE HE IS!
THERE'S SOMETHING WE'D LIKE YOU TO EXPLAIN TO US...
AH...
I CAN'T, RIGHT NOW...
.....

EXCUSE ME.
I'LL BE GOING NOW.
がたっ
CLATTER
IT'S OKAY.
I JUST KIND OF WANTED TO TALK, THAT'S ALL...
UH...
BUT...
AAH!
どん
SHOVE
UM, ABOUT TODAY'S HOME-WORK...
THE ESSAY IS REALLY SUPER HARD...
SORRY TO BOTHER YOU.
GOOD-BYE.

...HUH?
I'LL BE DONE SOON.
DO YOU HAVE SOME TIME RIGHT NOW?
CHISATO!
WOULD YOU LIKE SOME MEAT AND POTATO STEW?
WHAT?!
.....

ACTUALLY, I MADE TOO MUCH LAST NIGHT...
IT'S KIND OF HARD TO COOK FOR ONE PERSON.
PIPING HOT
ほっか
ほっか
REALLY?
IT'S DELICIOUS!
AWE-SOME...
YOU CAN EVEN COOK!
TRY IT! TRY IT!
O-OKAY.

.....
NOM NOM
ぱく ぱく
NOM NOM
ぱく ぱく
HAVE SOME! HAVE SOME!
CAN I HAVE MORE?
WATCHING
.....
YOU HAVE QUITE AN APPETITE.
PACK-ING IT IN
I'M HAPPY THAT SOMEONE EATS THE FOOD I MADE LIKE THAT.
YEP! ♡ I'M ♡ HAPPY JUST TO WATCH!
REALLY?


HE'S SO MUCH... PRETTIER...
...SUCH LONG EYE-LASHES...
THAN THAT WEIRD GIRL...
SILENCE
KOUTAROU IS REALLY A STRANGE PERSON...
SMILE
SMILE
S- SOMEHOW...
.....
IF SOMEONE SO PRETTY COULD MAKE FOOD LIKE THIS...
THEN A GUY WOULD BE SWEPT OFF HIS FEET.
OBSOLETE PHRASE
.....
A GIRL WOULD BE SWEPT OFF HER FEET...
KOUTAROU IS A GUY, SO...
HUH? DID THAT MAKE SENSE?
BUT I'M A GUY... UM?
?
...SO... WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT SCHOOL?
HUH!?
SO I'M SWEPT OFF MY FEET...?
WHAT!?
?!
?

...OH...
THAT'S RIGHT...
DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU WANTED TO QUIT SCHOOL?
.....
WELL... IT'S NOT...
BECAUSE THERE'S SOMETHING BAD GOING ON OR ANYTHING...
カチ...
CLACK.
WHEN EVERYONE'S HAVING A GOOD TIME IT'S FUN IN A WAY...

IS THE PROBLEM.
BUT THAT "FUN IN A WAY" PART...
.....
BECAUSE I FEEL LIKE I'M FINE.
THAT WAY, IT GOES ON LIKE THAT EVERYDAY...
BASICALLY... UM...
UMMMM... UMMMM...
KOUTAROU IS PROBABLY ANNOYED...
I MEAN, IT'S LIKE I CAN NEVER GET THAT TIME BACK...
UM... THAT'S A WASTE OF TIME...
AM I SAYING?
UH... WHAT...
IT'S OKAY. I UNDER-STAND.

WHEN WE WERE KIDS...
WE TRIED OUR BEST AT EVERY LITTLE THING, RIGHT?
NOW... I'M NOT TRYING MY BEST AT ANYTHING...
EVEN THOUGH I'M NOT WORKING HARD, GOOFING OFF ISN'T FUN AT ALL...
I THINK...
I TRULY WANT TO TRY MY VERY BEST.

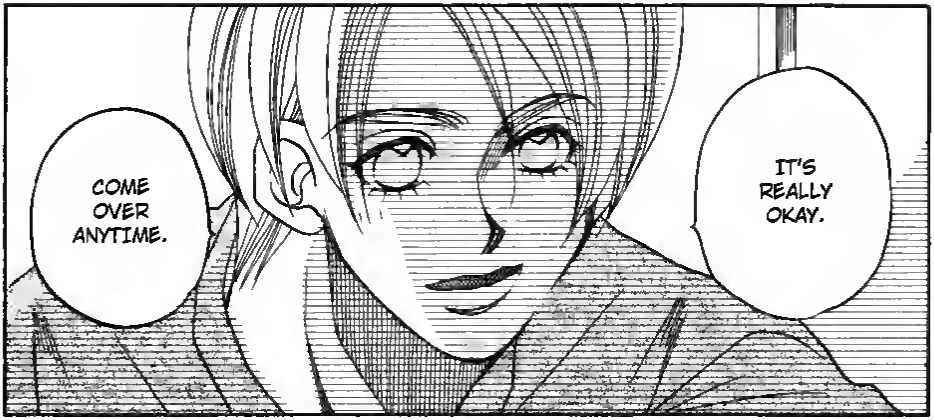
BUT THE THING THAT I CAN TRY MY BEST FOR...
ISN'T AT SCHOOL, SO...
BECAUSE THEY'RE ALL SMILING...
THAT'S WHAT I DO TOO, BUT...
EVEN THOUGH EVERYTHING IS REALLY BORING...
MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY SEEM LIKE THEY'RE ALL HAVING FUN.

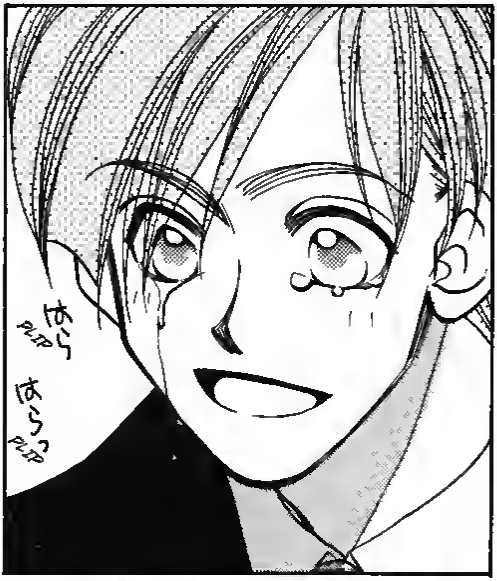
I CAN'T TELL YOU ANYTHING LIKE...
GO TO SCHOOL... OR QUIT SCHOOL...
BUT I UNDER-STAND...
WHAT YOU'RE SAYING.

I SMILED AND LAUGHED EVEN THOUGH I WASN'T HAVING FUN.
I DID THE EXACT SAME THING... EVEN AFTER I LEFT HIGH SCHOOL... EVEN AFTER I GOT INTO COLLEGE...
IS IT STILL THAT WAY, EVEN NOW?
.....
I CHANGED A BIT...
RECENTLY...
...NOW...
IT'S DIFFERENT.

MAN, IT'S GOTTEN LATE.
DO YOU KNOW WHERE THE STATION IS? SHOULD I TAKE YOU?
OH, IT'S OKAY...
THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR THE FOOD.

REALLY?
YEP.
IT'S REALLY OKAY IF I COME BY AGAIN?
I DON'T WANT TO BOTHER YOU.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
COME BY AGAIN ANYTIME.
I'LL MAKE SOMETHING JUST FOR YOU.


COME OVER ANYTIME.
IT'S REALLY OKAY.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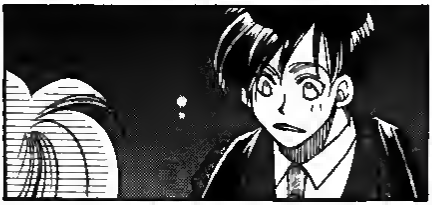

...THANK Y-

I'M CRYING!
ACK!
WHAT THE...!

I'M JUST...
SO SICK OF IT...
MY HOME... AND SCHOOL...
I'M REALLY SORRY... IT'S JUST...
I'M SO RELIEVED.
...I DON'T WANT...
TO GO HOME...
...!

I DON'T WANT TO GO BACK...
TO ANY OF THAT AGAIN.
...DO I HAVE TO GO BACK?
CAN'T I...
STAY HERE...?

...OKAY.
STAY...
HERE.
...MAY I COME IN...?
TO BE CONTINUED IN VOLUME 3

DOUSEI AI

LOVE UNDER ONE ROOF

WHO IS IN KOUTAROU'S FUTURE?! PART 2

READ PART 1 IN *DOUSEI AI* VOLUME 1!!

POP!!
DECIDED TO CALL SOME FRIENDS TO OPEN THE BOX WITH HIM SINCE HE COULDN'T DO IT ALONE.
THE COWARDLY KOUTAROU...
BA-DUM
BA-DUM
BA-DUM
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
I'M CHISATO KANEMAKI! A REALLY ENTHUSIASTIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT!
HELLO!!
TA DAAA!
WHAT'LL WE DO? WHAT IF HE HAPPENS TO BE AN IMPORTANT CHARACTER ...
NO WAY HE WOULD APPEAR NOW IF THAT'S THE CASE.
MUST BE FROM BEING BOXED UP FOR SO LONG...
HE SEEMS BURNT OUT.
COLLAPSE.
HUFF HUFF
EN... ENTHU... SIA...
A REALLY... ENTHU-SIASTIC...
PERISH!!
DON'T MAKE ASSERTIONS LIKE THAT.
AND THEY ALL LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER.